No to Lefever—*The Editors*

Marilyn French on Edith Wharton • Anne Tyler on American Ambition

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OPEC, American-Style

by Michael Kinsley

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Debbie Treshok drives 300,000 miles a year, four cars at a time.

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Debbie Treshok. One of 57,000 Gulf people, helping supply energy for tomorrow.

Gulf

Gulf people: energy for tomorrow.

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TRB

from Washington
June 13, 1981

Wall Street's Wisdom

President Reagan can't seem to convince Wall Street that big tax cuts aren't inflationary. Of course there might be a little inflation just at first, he says, but it would vanish with increased productivity. Wall Street isn't sure; it knows that a slow start may be dangerous. It recalls slapping obdurate containers: "My son, beware the catch-up bottle/First none will come, and then a lot'll. . . ."

That's inflation! But Reagan knows better. Sometimes it seems that he is having a harder time with Wall Street than with the Democrats. "I have never found Wall Street a source of good economic advice," he told a meeting of state and local officials here recently. He amiably declared the market is "looking through a very narrow glass." The bond market, in fact, is in a bad slump. With inflation around 10 percent, the price of bonds yielding only four or five percent goes down. That's what's happened as Wall Street contemplated the revolutionary supply-side economics: the market quietly bet on more inflation.

Treasury secretary Donald Regan takes Wall Street to task, too. He ought to know something about it—he was head of the great brokerage house of Merrill Lynch & Company before coming to Washington. "Everywhere I went last week," he said recently, "people were asking about Wall Street's response." It was unfavorable—as though they were looking through the wrong end of their binoculars, he said. To reassure them he gave them a pep talk from a 1924 book, written by Andrew Mellon, of all people. You remember Andrew Mellon. He was the slight, frail, modest, gentle, Edwardian secretary of the Treasury under Herbert Hoover, one of the richest men in the world, and he helped to bring about the Great Crash and panic of 1929. He was the one who said, when Wall Street collapsed: "Let the slump liquidate itself. Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate. . . . It will purge the rottenness out of the system!"

I don't suppose any political leader has extolled Mellon's economic acumen for 50 years, and it is nice to have him rehabilitated among the Republicans. Secretary Regan said that "these days Mr. Mellon is getting a new and well-deserved reading." He complained that "our governmental tax policies moved from Mellon's basic principles to a flashy, high-gear version aimed at stimulating consumption, redistributing wealth, and generally reshaping social goals." Now, fortunately, the old-fashioned Mellon views "are inherent in the economic program which President Reagan has put before the nation."

But I think Andrew Mellon would have difficulty accepting the Kemp-Roth supply-side philosophy—even Keynes was too much for him. Keynes argued that when the economy collapsed the government should step in. That wasn't the Mellon notion at all. But times change, and by 1969 Republican president Richard Nixon was saying, "We are all Keynesians now." And today comes a newer idea adduced by enthusiastic young economist Arthur Laffer: if federal taxes have reached a certain point (nobody knows just where) they stifle the economy. The way to get things humming again is to cut them back (nobody knows how much) and, if the process is done just right, it will stimulate production and before long Treasury will be taking in more taxes than ever. Ronald Reagan bought the idea wholeheartedly in 1979; now the quarrel in Washington is over how much taxes should be cut. How this would startle Andy Mellon! Despite ten percent inflation, the Republican president is demanding extraordinary slashes in federal taxes and it is the Democrats who are trying to hold him back.

Representative Jack Kemp, Republican of New York, brought supply-side economics to Washington in 1976. Kemp is eager, attractive, vigorous, enthusiastic, young, and a former quarterback for the Buffalo Bills. Kemp explains his creed at a newspaper breakfast group and statistics emerge in a torrent. There is such a pressure of escaping ideas that he has to stop and catch his breath. He drops a hint that the next thing after Kemp-Roth is a return to gold; he thinks that leaving the gold standard in 1971 was "our single biggest mistake."

Nobody knows what supply-side economics will do. Columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak say in a sympathetic article in the *Reader's Digest* this month, "the outcome will determine the historic role of Ronald Reagan's presidency." They declare, "Now, no less than the future of capitalism is at stake." Yes, sir, they feel that the outcome "will determine what kind of country America will be in its third century." It is invigorating to deal in these absolutes, but most people take a less eschatological view. Probably some compromise will be worked out. But there are many shivery uncertainties in Washington right now, and the question always lurks in the background: does the popular Ronald Reagan know what he's about?

Last week *Time* and *Newsweek* had cover stories about separate problems that were in a way connected. The piece in *Time* was on "The Savings Revolution" and noted the havoc that inflation is wreaking, particularly in the money markets. Skepticism on Wall Street about the administration's economic program, the magazine noted, "has sent bond prices plunging." The *Newsweek* piece was about the Reagan defense buildup, the biggest in peacetime history. It will amount to $1.5 trillion over the next five years, with one new nuclear aircraft carrier costing $2.4 billion. Here again it's a money matter. Today everybody agrees that Lyndon Johnson made a dreadful mistake in pushing the Vietnam War without raising taxes. This prompted a major inflationary trend. Now we are taking on a huge military buildup, with prices already high, and this time we are cutting taxes, not raising them.

Does Reagan measure the consequence of things he undertakes? The big new military establishment we are setting up, for instance, will require an equivalent increase in personnel. Reagan said the other day at West Point that he opposes a draft: "A new spirit is sweeping across our land . . . the era of self-doubt is over." That's fine, but he implied that this new spirit, plus higher pay, will allow us to continue an all-volunteer military. The writers at *Newsweek* don't agree. They say that "a return to the draft seems all but inevitable." They don't disapprove of the buildup, mind you, they just try to anticipate what will happen. Can we afford it? Again, no verdict, just a rueful, "there are ample grounds for concern."

So it goes these days in Washington. Most of the popular president's troubles lie ahead.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

June 13, 1981

Starve a Cold, Veto Lefever

President Reagan has decided to go to the mat, the Senate floor, to win confirmation for Ernest Lefever as assistant secretary of State for human rights. When Lefever, a man who has long believed that human rights standards are a nuisance, first ran into strong opposition from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the administration hesitated. There were reports that the nomination might be quietly withdrawn. But instead of cutting its losses the administration decided to up the ante. On June 2 the White House arranged an ostentatious huddle with Lefever to plan strategy for a second round of confirmation hearings. This embrace was meant to dramatize Reagan's position: "I haven't retreated one inch from wanting him."

There are many important principles at stake in the Lefever nomination, but they are being obscured by a number of irrelevancies raised by both sides. Lefever's opponents have argued that a working majority of Lefever's brothers opposes his nomination. This consideration is undoubtedly of interest to Fidel Castro's anticommunist sister living in Florida, but to no one else. One brother has spread the story that Lefever has made racist comments in private conversation. Lefever has denied the charge, which belongs to the John Dean school of journalism and not to Senate confirmation hearings. Then there is the issue of Lefever's think tank, the Ethics and Public Policy Center, which accepted money from the Nestlé Corporation while distributing articles on the infant formula controversy that were distinctly favorable to Nestlé's position. Taking money from donors who have sympathy for or an interest in one's positions may be something that Caesar's wife would not do, but think tanks do it all the time. It may be an impropriety, as the *Wall Street Journal* says, but it is certainly not the "conflict of interest" bugaboo conjured up by his opponents. Lefever's position on infant formula is consistent with his views on unrestricted free trade. Nestlé did not have to buy, nor has it been shown to have bought, Lefever's views. We happen to think his position on infant formula is wrong, (see "Motherhood, Too," *TNR*, May 30), but it has nothing to do with human rights.

Lefever's patrons have raised an equally irrelevant issue in favor of his nomination. The argument goes like this: President Reagan was elected by an impressive majority of the American people. To deny him the ability to put his team in place is to thwart the will of the people. But four years ago the Republicans seemed unconcerned with the will of the people when they succeeded in blocking President Carter's choice of Theodore Sorenson for the top CIA job. And for good reason: the Senate's duty to advise and consent on high presidential appointments is a circumscribed but immensely useful function in a limited democracy. It defines a kind of national consensus on the outer limits of presidential action. It tells the president that, yes, he may fulfill his mandate, but that certain actions lie beyond the pale. Republicans, however, see every move that opposes the president as counterrevolutionary. It is getting a bit tiresome to hear that those who propose, say, a two-year as opposed to a three-year tax cut are defying the will of the people. But at least on that issue, the Reaganites can argue that the Kemp-Roth tax cut was an election issue. Ernest Lefever was not. He must win the support of the Senate.

The issues involved in the Lefever nomination are ideological and it is on ideological grounds that his nomination should be rejected. The plain fact is that Ernest Lefever does not believe that human rights should have anything to do with the formulation of foreign policy. He has made that abundantly clear throughout his career. "Giving human rights a central place [in foreign policy] subordinates, blurs, or distorts

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all other relevant considerations," he wrote in 1977. What are the relevant considerations? "Economic and military aid should be given or withheld to encourage sound external policies, but not to reform domestic institutions and practices, however obnoxious." For most of Lefever's career, this disdain for human rights applied equally to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. "It is arrogant to attempt to reform the domestic behavior of our allies *or our adversaries*" (our italics). It is now widely reported in the press that Lefever wants to use human rights as a stick against Communist enemies but not against repressive allies. In fact, Lefever has long believed that concern about human rights violations in the Soviet Union is as harmful to our larger objectives as the pursuit of human rights in, say, "friendly" Argentina. He said unequivocally that our strategic and trade policies toward Moscow should not be "influenced, much less determined, by the extent of human rights violations in the Soviet Union."

Since Reagan's victory in November, the prospect of high office has helped concentrate Lefever's mind on the distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. He has now carefully adopted a stand consistent with that of the administration: human rights violations in nonhostile authoritarian states should be treated with quiet diplomacy and delicacy; human rights violations in totalitarian states, i.e., the Soviet bloc, may be dealt with more openly and severely. Lefever undoubtedly is correct that some who use human rights to attack and weaken regimes like South Korea ignore human rights violations in countries like Vietnam and Cuba. But there is no virtue in doing the reverse. If our response to human rights violations is dictated not by the nature of the violations but by geopolitical factors, then it is not a human rights policy at all. The reason we should take a harder line toward, say, Soviet human rights violations than toward South Korea's is simply that the Soviets' violations are more widespread and severe. There is no need for a geopolitical justification. To decide in advance that certain human rights violators should get a free ride weakens the entire human rights argument, and destroys our credibility in all our human rights actions. If we are against repression in the Soviet Union but not in South Korea, then we are not against repression. We are merely against the Soviet Union.

The question of whether quiet or open diplomacy is more useful is a purely technical one. The answer depends on the history of our relations with a given country, on whether our public or private efforts have yielded more results. International relations cannot be dictated by an *a priori* schema in which quiet diplomacy is assigned to authoritarian regimes and public diplomacy to totalitarian ones. To do so transforms our human rights policy from a means of reducing torture and suffering and political repression into a vehicle for propaganda.

Lefever's earlier position of universal opposition to human rights activity is at least less hypocritical than the Reaganite authoritarian-totalitarian human rights distinction that he has adopted to help his confirmation. But Lefever now represents the new Reagan foreign policy line on human rights. That is why Reagan has decided to fight for Lefever's nomination. And Reagan has chosen to make the nomination a test of strength, of his ability to have his way in foreign policy. His maneuvers on domestic policy are based on a similar strategy. Even though the Democrats have presented him with a compromise tax-cut proposal that approximates the president's own, he has rejected the compromise and announced his intention to fight for his version. It is hard to discern the principle at stake here, since both sides agree on policy and are arguing only over numbers. But it is not hard to discern the symbolism: Reagan wants to show that he can get what he wants and that, despite the absence of a formal majority in Congress, his popularity has earned him a free hand. A victory for Lefever would win him a free hand in foreign policy. After all, Lefever's nomination is a weak choice that has aroused bitter bipartisan opposition and stands as an overt rebuke to the human rights advances of the previous Democratic administration. If it cannot be stopped by Congress, nothing can. Unlike Secretary Haig, President Reagan doesn't need a press conference to announce "I am in charge here." Confirming a human rights opponent to manage our human rights policy would do just as well.

One area where the US is indisputably second to none in the world is in observance of human rights. It is the principal reason why people keep fleeing other countries and coming to ours. To deny the place of human rights in our foreign policy or to distort it by subordinating it to the dictates of realpolitik is to deny a moral imperative that, under a variety of names, has animated our foreign policy for 200 years. Moreover, it is to deny our foreign policy a powerful source of support at home and legitimacy abroad. And that would be contrary not only to our principles but also to our interests.

More bad news for the working poor.

The Medi-Cal Diet

When Ronald Reagan was governor of California, he was generous to a group of people that failed to meet eligibility requirements for health care under the federal Medicaid program. That group was the working poor. Soon after his 1970 reelection, Reagan devised a plan for the state to assume responsibility for the medical care of these people, who chose to work rather than go on welfare, and thus embodied, to some extent, the conservative ideal. In 1971 the plan became

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Correspondence

Knowing names

To the editors:

There are several puzzling sentences in William Phillips's otherwise excellent review of Victor Navasky's *Naming Names* (*TNR*, April 18).

For instance, when Phillips writes: "When it comes to the liberal anti-communists, those who named names and those who did not . . . ," what "liberal anti-communists" does he have in mind? No liberal anti-communists that I knew named names, because none (myself included) knew any names to name. The Communists jealously guarded their membership lists from everyone except, according to Navasky, the Los Angeles Police Department.

The naming of names before Congress was done by two groups only: repentant ex-Communists, and right-wing extremists, who, with a fine impartiality, named Communists and non-communist liberals alike.

Again, Phillips accuses the Communists of "blacklisting former members and liberal anti-communists." Here he finds himself in agreement only with Ronald Reagan, who has consistently spread a similar fantasy. (In the Reagan version, Communists blacklisted 100 percent Americans—like Reagan.)

The Hollywood Communists may have been eager and willing to do a little blacklisting of their own, but they lacked both the executive positions and the power. Ronald Reagan had trouble finding work for professional, not political, reasons.

Philip Dunne
Malibu, California

William Phillips replies:

I thought it was clear both in my review and in Navasky's book that some of the ex-Communists who named names were liberals and some conservatives. I do not know what Philip Dunne's affiliations were, but I was obviously not referring to liberal anti-communists who had never been members of the Communist party and therefore knew no names.

As for the blacklisting by Communists of former members and of liberal anti-communists, I was referring not to Hollywood, of which I had no personal experience, but to the publishing and academic worlds of New York and the east, of which I had some intimate knowledge. Perhaps I should have made this clearer. The memoir which I have just finished gives some instances of the blacklisting of myself and other liberal anti-communists. But these things were well known in liberal and radical circles.

Anyway, I am glad that these "puzzling sentences" did not detract from what Philip Dunne thought was an "otherwise excellent review."

Nukes

To the editors:

The article "Nuclear Innocents Abroad" (*TNR*, May 9) by your executive editor Morton Kondracke is a vicious attack on those who understand the dangers involved in present US arms policy and therefore wish to modify it. Early in the article Kondracke implies that the opposition to arms proliferation is backed chiefly by "religious pacifists, . . . left-wing socialists, and *Communists*" (my italics). He then goes on to a personal attack on Admiral La Roque, director of the Committee for Defense Information, a study group sponsored by a large fraction of our most eminent scientists, including two former scientific presidential advisers. He charges the admiral with various vicious schemes to confine nuclear war to Europe, and calls him a dangerous isolationist. This is strange material to appear in a traditionally objective publication.

To me a strange thing about all the discussion of possible war with Russia, nuclear or otherwise, is the absence of any consideration of the basic question, namely, what disagreement between the two superpowers would justify the destruction of civilization in a nuclear war? My answer to this is *none*.

C. Fayette Taylor
Brookline, Massachusetts

Morton Kondracke replies:

My intention was to be neither vicious nor personal, merely critical. Admiral La Rocque has a hidden agenda—US withdrawal from Europe—which he does not share with Europeans whose interests he pretends to defend. I ask: is Europe safer disarmed and abandoned by the United States, or with a stable East-West balance of power? Both courses have their dangers. More arms do not necessarily guarantee greater security. Disarmament negotiations are vital. But if our side forgoes theater nuclear weapons in Europe, what incentive will the Soviets have to dismantle any of their 200 SS-20 rockets?

Microsocialists

To the editors:

Unlike Michael Harrington ("Eurosocialism Takes Off," *TNR*, May 30), we of Social Democrats, USA, the other American member party to the Socialist International, are not as uncritical of some directions recently taken by the SI. What Harrington sees as "a major breakthrough," namely, the turn toward what he admits are at best authoritarian and at worst totalitarian third world parties that call themselves socialist, is in fact a major breakthrough for anti-democratic, and at times even terrorist, elements in their search for the support of world public opinion. For the SI, it is a breakdown in the democratic principles adopted at its founding. Overtures by Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky to the PLO and a general weakening of support for Israel by the SI are consistent with a trend that tilts toward third world totalitarian movements. With increasing frequency, Israel has the support of only Social Democrats, USA, and a few other member parties in the deliberations of the SI.

Rita Freedman
Executive Director
Social Democrats, USA
New York, New York

A red F for Reagan

To the editors:

I just received the May 2 issue of *TNR*, and after trying to revive my third-year Latin in order to catch the translingual wit that lay buried in the copy of your cover-within-a-cover, I turned to "Hitting the Ground Stumbling." If Reagan & Co.'s policies continue and intensify, as seems likely (what with Haig wanting to send military aid to the Guatemalan despots and to the brutal, fascist, anti-Semitic government of Argentina), *The New Republic* will have to do not only a post-mortem but *post mortes*, for all the deaths that will have occurred at the hands of these terrorist regimes, as well as *ante mortes* for all the deaths that inevitably will occur in sickeningly large numbers.

In the article you write: "In El Salva-

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law. The working poor of California have enjoyed medical protection ever since, just like those on welfare, who are eligible for Medicaid, and those who either can afford private health insurance or have employers or unions that provide it for them.

This will change soon. Proposition 13 has reduced state revenues, and the little-known but more drastic Proposition 4, passed in 1979, limits the growth of state and local expenditures by a rigid formula based on population and cost-of-living increases. The state has less money to spend, and less spending power. But California's fiscal problems are not entirely homegrown. Some of the worst damage will be caused by proposed federal cuts in Medicaid. Hospital costs now outrun inflation, yet President Reagan has asked Congress to limit Medicaid outlays to the states to a five-percent yearly growth. This "cap" would be particularly hard on California. Because it is the nation's most populous state, and because it is unusually generous in its health care appropriations (most of which Medicaid is obliged to match), it stands to lose more federal money than most other states. As a consequence of the cap, California would lose $167 million in the next fiscal year alone.

CALIFORNIA'S combined state-federal health care program, Medi-Cal, will have to be reduced drastically, and the group likely to lose its eligibility first is the one the state bears full burden for—the working poor. President Reagan's cap thus will lead to a betrayal of those same Californians Governor Reagan sought to help in an act of uncharacteristic munificence back in 1971. It also will lead to a betrayal of Reagan's own conservative ideology, creating a disincentive to work. This disincentive, in turn, will have a boomerang effect on that august conservative principle—federalism. Once the state has less federal money, and thus nothing to squander on the working poor, those who choose unemployment and Medicaid over employment and no more Medi-Cal will remain in the partial medical care of the federal government.

Ronald Reagan's much touted "commitment to the working poor" is really more of a fair-weather friendship. As Stephen Chapman has shown in these pages ("Stamping Out the Poor," *TNR*, April 11), the administration favors increasing the already strong disincentives to work for people on food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children. And when Reagan was cooking up his 1971 scheme to add the working poor to Medi-Cal, admiration for the sturdy laborer probably was a weaker motivation than the need to offer something to the Democratic California legislature in return for ridding the state of the "county option program."

The county option program was started in California back in 1965, soon after Medicaid and Medi-Cal were created. Under this program, the state offered each county a choice: the county could maintain health spending at the level prior to 1965 (that is, before the creation of Medicaid and Medi-Cal), with the state reimbursing the county for any money spent above that level; or the county could reduce or eliminate its own program, and instead pay a share of Medi-Cal costs for that county. The counties had been required by California law for over 100 years to provide for those who could not afford medical treatment. Since nearly every county had a county hospital and a long tradition of commitment to health care, it's not surprising that nearly all of them chose the first option. Nor is it surprising that, given a blank check by the state, the counties let health costs soar. In fiscal year 1968 the state spent $28 million on the county hospitals; by fiscal year 1972, the last year of the county option program, the state contribution had grown to $126 million.

BY EARLY 1970 Reagan was predicting that state spending would lead to "inevitable bankruptcy if not curtailed." Most of Reagan's personal attention was concentrated on welfare reform, but his health director, Dr. Earl Brian, worked vigorously to bring health costs under state control. During Reagan's first term, the administration had tried to tamper with Medicaid, but California Rural Legal Assistance lawyers successfully challenged this in court as a violation of federal law. (Reagan recently exacted revenge by proposing to eliminate the group's federal equivalent, the Legal Services Corporation. See "Let's Keep Legal Services," by David L. Bazelon, page 17.) By the start of Reagan's second term, he was ready to compromise. If he couldn't alter Medicaid, maybe he could cut the county option program. "It was no secret," recalls Paul Press, consultant to the California Assembly Health Committee, "that Earl Brian was not enamored of the county system." Brian offered an alternative: if the legislature agreed to eliminate the county option, then Medi-Cal benefits would be extended to the working poor, defined roughly as California residents who earned one-third more than welfare recipients, who were eligible for Medicaid. There are still heated debates about how many people this group comprised. At the time Brian estimated 850,000. To date, the number of working poor who have actually received these Medi-Cal benefits is somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000, but Steve Thompson of the Assembly Office of Research says that over a million people are now eligible.

In the May 29 *New York Times*, Philip Lee, professor of social medicine at the University of California at San Francisco, and Barry Ensminger, a visiting scholar at that university, challenge the view that the California legislature made a good deal for the working poor in the 1971 compromise. They argue that Brian's plan "reversed the trend toward more equitable financing," replacing the liberal county option program with "restrictive state eligibility guidelines." They compare it implicitly with Reagan's 1981 Medicaid proposal: "In effect, state responsibility was 'capped.'" Thompson,

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on the other hand, says the state was more generous in its eligibility guidelines than most of the counties had been under the county option program. But he concedes that official stringency on the part of the counties was usually balanced by an informal approach to enforcement of the guidelines.

EVERYONE agrees that the transfer of money from county hospitals and county health plans to private hospitals and private health plans funded by Medi-Cal has led to an erosion of California's once impressive network of county hospitals. Before Medi-Cal, nearly every county in the state had a county hospital; now only half do. This transfer of resources from the public to the private sector has its advantages. Certainly one would rather offer the working poor a chance to receive care in Los Angeles's impressive Cedars-Sinai Medical Center than send them to an L.A. County hospital. And fly-by-night private health insurance is discouraged by complicated state regulations that were established after a number of Medi-Cal scandals in the early 1970s in which "nonprofit" health providers were found to have illegal profit-making subsidiaries. There's a lot to say for giving the poor access to health care that otherwise would be available only to the rich. But what will happen when Medi-Cal is forced to cut back? Representative Henry Waxman, Democrat of California and chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "The Reagan proposal . . . would be disastrous for the state. . . . It means for California a tremendous burden to continue Medi-Cal and I think the state will have to cut back on health care and shift more [of the financial burden] to the county." And county government, Bill Boyarsky writes in the *Times* article, "is not prepared to carry the load."

The California legislature is currently working on a number of proposals to reduce Medi-Cal expenditures. One proposal that is quickly making its way to the floors of the assembly and state senate would cut back the range of services available to the working poor. At a savings of $18.2 million, Medi-Cal would eliminate all benefits for dental services, eyeglasses, podiatry, and hearing aids for the working poor. Further cuts are likely. The proposal also would impose co-payment requirements designed to discourage abuse of the system: a one-dollar charge for each yearly visit to the doctor, and for each drug prescription, and a five-dollar charge for each emergency room visit. These nominal fees aren't likely to encourage much self-restraint. The proposal, like Reagan's proposed federal limit on Medicaid, imposes a spending cap—six percent, a hair more generous than Reagan's five percent—on annual growth. The inflationary increase for hospital in-patient services is expected to be 13 percent.

The California legislature is also considering various private and/or public health plans for the working poor that would be less expensive than Medi-Cal. Serious attention is being given to handing block grants over to the counties and passing the working poor back to them. Given the slender shape of the state budget, it is likely that such block grants would resemble those being proposed by the federal government under President Reagan—cut funds, then pass the buck—more closely than they would resemble the generous old county option program.

Ronald Reagan clearly has made a mess of the state's commitment to the working poor. So it is surprising to hear how cheerful some people in Sacramento are about the future of Medi-Cal under the administration cap. "We can absorb the Reagan cuts with some modification," says assemblyman Art Torres. "What we've got with the Reagan plan is livable," Steve Thompson of the Assembly Office of Research says. These people presumably have been forced to smile and accept the Reagan cap because a more severe alternative has been proposed by Robert Dole, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. The Dole proposal has been endorsed by the Senate Finance Committee and will be examined this week on the House side. It suggests higher annual Medicaid increases than the administration does—nine percent instead of five percent—but federal matching funds to states (like California) that have a high per capita income would be 40 percent, not 50 percent. The loss to the state, says Beverlee Myers, director of the California Department of Human Services, could be as high as $400 million in a single fiscal year. That's much worse news for the working poor. Reagan may well be hoping that Dole's version wins, for it if does, the president can blame the sorry lot of California's working poor on someone else.

Timothy Noah

An interview with Pierre Mauroy.

'We Were Suffocating'

Pierre Mauroy, 52, is the first Socialist prime minister of France's Fifth Republic. He is credited with recruiting François Mitterrand to be the new leader of the French Socialist party in 1971. Mauroy, mayor of Lille until Mitterrand appointed him prime minister last month, is one of the most popular politicians in the northern region of France, where the Socialist party traditionally has been the main party of the working class (in contrast to the south, where the Communists are stronger). Mauroy's grandfather was a coal miner turned lumberjack; his father was a lumberjack turned schoolteacher; and he is a vocational-school teacher turned politician. A centrist who has warm relations with leaders of Social Democratic parties elsewhere in

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Europe, he has a reputation for political morality and has sometimes been called the French Willy Brandt. This interview for *The New Republic*, conducted in his Paris office, is his first with the American press since he became prime minister.

TNR: *The Reagan types are uneasy about the left coming to power in France.*

Pierre Mauroy: Uneasy about what?

TNR: *First, about the possibility of Communist ministers in the government after the legislative elections on June 15.*

Mauroy: France has already experimented with Communist participation in the government. And it didn't come off too badly. It wasn't a Socialist but General de Gaulle himself who was the first to give them ministerial posts, after the Liberation. On the other hand, it was a Socialist president of the council of ministers who fired them when they stopped respecting the rule of governmental solidarity.

TNR: *Exactly the point. The experiment didn't work very well. The Communist party tried to infiltrate the ministries they were in charge of.*

Mauroy: Even then, though, nobody thought for a second that the country would actually "go Communist." Now, today, the Communist party doesn't have anything like the prestige or influence it had decades ago. It got only 15 percent of the vote in the last election. And there is really no reason for Communist voters, who are French citizens like everybody else, to be excluded forever from national life.

TNR: *Are you saying that the Communist party* will *be part of the next government?*

Mauroy: President Mitterrand was very clear about this during the campaign. If the forces of social change get a majority in the legislative elections, he will try to work with the Communists, as he has said again and again. He hasn't closed the door on them. But it must be remembered that when the Union of the Left broke down in 1977, it was precisely because we couldn't agree on updating the common program [of 1972]. The parties of the left have serious disagreements, and we don't hide them. We Socialists are partisans of social change tempered by economic reality. In foreign policy we are resolutely determined to maintain our alliances. We'll never compromise on that. A fundamental debate between the Socialists and the Communists must now take place, and the country will choose. The country will make the definitive decision.

TNR: *Your economic policy is much criticized in international financial circles. It is likened to Harold Wilson's program, which was not particularly successful in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. What's your response?*

Mauroy: The conservatives governed France for 28 years. France became their property and they exploited it shamelessly. Look at the joy that President Mitterrand's victory unleashed. We had been suffocating. It seems to me that in the United States people don't fully realize the magnitude of the social injustice that weighs down on our society—a society that even a Gaullist prime minister [Jacques Chaban-Delmas in 1969] called "a blocked society." Do Americans know, for example, that a worker's son has a far harder time bettering himself here than in the US? Or that our system of taxation is totally regressive? We have a system of inequality of opportunity, and that's the system we are going to change—

TNR: *By promising a series of nationalizations and statist measures that is the mirror image of "Reaganomics"?*

Mauroy: It was General de Gaulle, in 1945, who nationalized most of the enterprises that make up the public sector of the economy today. It was the right that spent more than two decades bureaucratizing French society. One of the staples of conservative propaganda in this country always has been the bogeyman of collectivism. But it's a phony argument. For more than 60 years, ever since the Congress of Tours [when the French workers' movement broke apart, into the Socialist and Communist parties], the French Socialists consistently have rejected the Soviet model of state control. On the contrary, we believe in liberating the country's energies through regional decentralization; and we understand very well the need to encourage the spirit of enterprise, which is precisely the spirit that has been fading in recent years. Small and medium-sized businesses were saddled with a crushing burden of taxation and regulation under the Giscard d'Estaing administration. I'm convinced we'll be able to give those businesses some breathing space in the coming months. As for the nationalizations that we have projected, they will be undertaken in due course, not precipitously, and with a will to turning them into enterprises as dynamic as Renault. Now there's a nationalized company which, in this time of crisis for the auto industry, could give one or two lessons in management to certain American car manufacturers. That's one example of successful nationalization. There are plenty of others, believe me.

TNR: *In foreign policy, Washington and Paris are pretending, for the moment, to agree on just about everything—*

Mauroy: We're not pretending at all. President Mitterrand has said all along that he seeks agreement with the Soviet Union, but based on firmness, not on acceptance of a *fait accompli*. He criticized Mr. Giscard d'Estaing for having, in a sense, bailed out the Russians for their invasion of Afghanistan by meeting Mr. Brezhnev in Warsaw last year. Nor does President Mitterrand go along with the way his predecessor condescendingly referred to the Afghans as "rebels," since in fact they are true resistance fighters. He has said consistently that the massive Soviet deployment of SS-20s in Europe constitutes a rupture in the overall

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military balance. Our position is clear: we are for detente and against submission.

TNR: *But in the third world, don't you think you will quickly run afoul of the Reagan administration, which is willing to accommodate dictatorships as long as they're not Communist?*

Mauroy: We don't intend to be silent. The message of socialism to the world is first of all a message of solidarity and liberty. And that includes defending the rights of human beings, which are clearly flouted by a number of Central American dictatorships. Indeed, to support such dictatorships is to push all opponents of the status quo into the arms of communism, as recent history shows in Cuba and elsewhere. France is and will remain faithful to her allies and her alliances, and that will never lead her to betray her moral code and stay mute in the face of violations of human rights, whether in the East or in the West. But I want to stress that the fact that we reserve the right to make our own judgments will never tarnish the Franco-American friendship, which is so old and so deeply anchored in both our peoples—a friendship founded and fortified by the blood that has been shed on both sides of the Atlantic, by our people and yours, to gain liberty or to regain it.

Franz-Olivier Giesbert

Franz-Olivier Giesbert is national affairs editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*. The interview was translated from the French by Hendrik Hertzberg.

Reagan is cutting the wrong commitments.

Containing Containment

For a long time the United States has suffered the cost—and enjoyed the benefits—of running a great global alliance. Among the benefits has been the postponement of the need to bring its accounts into order. Lesser nations must trim their sails when outgo exceeds income; the United States simply prints more money. When our allies devalued the dollar to its true worth and OPEC began to raise its prices, the system stopped working. The shield of inflation no longer protects. The Reagan administration's answer is to make Draconian slashes in domestic spending. But because those cuts have been matched by dramatic increases in military spending, Reagan's program is no less inflationary than those of his predecessors. Look at the reaction of Wall Street. It knows that a dieter who goes off peanut butter sandwiches so that he can eat more hot fudge sundaes is not likely to have much success tightening his belt.

Reagan's soothing homilies, and the acquiesence of congressional Democrats to a sleight of hand that shifts resources from civilian to military spending, cannot conceal the underlying problem. Inflation thus far has masked the full cost of commitments the government has undertaken both at home and abroad, but if Reagan is to deal seriously with inflation, the nation must either reduce those commitments or find new ways of paying for them. Reagan chooses to reduce commitments to school lunch programs and Social Security. There are other methods. One is to ask whether the vast increases earmarked for the Pentagon actually augment our military security. Another is to reexamine critically the cost of underwriting our global network of cold war alliances and involvements.

It is fanciful to suppose that Reagan can increase the military budget over the next five years by $181 billion, as he proposes, without either destroying the remaining federal programs on which a modern industrial society (and his own middle-class support) rests, or triggering an inflation even beyond that we have so far experienced. The huge new military budget should be scrutinized no less closely than the mutilated domestic budget. This means examining the cost-effectiveness of weapons systems far more stringently, and the foreign commitments they are designed to implement. Reagan does not want to reexamine those commitments. (Indeed, he is intent on expanding them.) But unless he does the nation is likely to experience economic stagnation, domestic hardship, and eventual bankruptcy on the British model.

The United States is still very rich and strong. It can do many things. But it cannot run the world, even the "free world," single-handedly. It must, like an individual of great but nonetheless limited means, understand the difference between a necessary expense and a spendthrift spasm. It must bring its ambitions into line with its means. What is needed is a fundamental reappraisal both of how we organize our resources and of how we define our interests in the world.

In this task there is no better place to begin than with James Chace's provocative new book, *Solvency: The Price of Survival* (Random House). In clear and forceful prose Chace lays out the problem—that the United States is sliding into bankruptcy because it has not brought its means into line with its objectives—shows how it happened, and suggests how it might be remedied. As a guideline, Chace cites Walter Lippmann's classic definition of a viable foreign policy as bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power, a nation's commitments and a nation's power.

That is a fine definition. The only problem with it, as Chace realizes, is that it does not prescribe, in any given case, whether the power should be increased or the commitments trimmed. For his part, Chace would keep most of the commitments—Europe, Japan, Israel, access to the Persian Gulf—and pay the bill by "revitalizing" the economy. To be sure, such "revitalization" is easier said than done, and most of the current scenarios—whether Reagan's or those of corporate finance

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liberals like Felix Rohatyn—are more comforting than persuasive. But unless it is done, the only alternatives are inflation, economic stagnation, and a declining standard of living for most Americans.

Limited resources implies, as Chace points out, the need to define our interests more rigorously, and above all to distinguish clearly between vital and secondary ones. Definitely secondary is most of the third world, including that source of the Reagan administration's current anxieties, Central America. Advising that we "distinguish between those who pose actual military threats to our security and states whose governments, although they may be hostile to us, are not directly menacing," Chace would be indifferent to quasi-Marxist regimes.

HERE IS AN ISSUE to which true conservatives—as distinct from radical interventionists—should be sympathetic, for it is a question of priorities. The internal politics of other nations may be interesting, they may even be distasteful, but they become vital interests only when they directly affect American security. And it is clear that in a time of diminished resources, and of a reduced ability to control events in other parts of the world, the definition of American security has to be more tightly drawn than it has been over the past 30 years.

Whatever one's politics, such a redefinition of security is dictated by economic realities. We simply do not have the economic surplus and the political freedom of action to enforce our conception of political organization on nations that, however annoying, are in no position to do us physical harm. Even Robert W. Tucker, a forceful advocate of American military power in the Persian Gulf, has written recently that we should take a hands-off position toward events now occurring in Central America, including a cut-off of military aid to the junta in El Salvador. For our own safety, we have to distinguish between what we would like and what is essential to our security.

Our only vital interest in the third world, both Chace and Tucker would agree, lies in the oil-producing states surrounding the Persian Gulf. So long as we remain dependent on foreign oil (currently 35 percent of our consumption), the political instability of these states will be a problem for us. Clearly the first order of business for any American president must be to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, and particularly on oil from the Persian Gulf. The best way to deal with our dependence on an unstable area is to make ourselves less dependent, not to embark upon an enormously costly rearmament program, including an Indian Ocean navy, for the purpose of maintaining that dependency.

Persian Gulf oil is not nearly as crucial to us as it is to the West Europeans and Japanese. It is axiomatic that those who have a critical interest in securing a commodity should assume the major role in assuring access to it. Our allies so far have been spared that burden, as they have been spared the burden of assuming responsibility for their own defense.

They were spared for a long time because they were weak. After they ceased to be weak they were spared because they had fallen into a habit of dependency—a habit that we actively encouraged. That dependency has made them more amenable to our political and economic desires than they otherwise would have been. It made possible what David Calleo has called the "monetary hegemony" that allowed us to export the real cost of our overseas entanglements, including the Vietnam War, in the form of a debased currency.

That hegemony was the payoff for the protection we provided for our allies. The economic benefits have now disappeared, and the dollar has to make its way in the world like any other currency. But the United States still provides the major cost of the protection. Why do we do this? For a number of reasons: because we are used to it, because it gives us political influence over the Europeans and the Japanese, and because it is gratifying to our self-image. And we do it because our allies are not doing it themselves. And why are they not doing it? Because it is expensive and—so long as we provide the protection—unnecessary.

THE COST has been great. Over the past 30 years we have spent from a third to a half of the defense budget, directly or indirectly, on defending Europe in a conventional war. The Defense Department estimates that we are currently devoting approximately $81 billion this fiscal year to forces formally committed to NATO. That is more than half the total defense budget. Bringing back six of the present ten US divisions assigned to NATO would, it is estimated, save some $30 billion over the next three years. That would be a major step toward meeting the balance of payments deficit, which was $28 billion in 1979.

Few doubt that Europe could make up the difference. The major European members of NATO are as prosperous as we. Some are more so because they channel a significantly smaller proportion of their national wealth into the military than we do. And of course the Japanese enjoy the greatest benefits of American protection, devoting about one-sixth as much to defense as does the United States. Our allies could do more, much more. But if they do more they will demand a greater voice in how their forces are used, and what the policies of the alliance should be.

If they took over primary responsibility for their own defense, as well as for access to the oil of the Persian Gulf, they would also demand greater control over military strategy and diplomacy. They would, for example, no doubt insist on negotiating directly with the Soviets over security matters rather than through the intermediary of Washington. This is something we do not want, and in fact when General de Gaulle tried to move in that direction, we castigated him as disloyal and ungrateful. Given the choice between paying for our allies' defense (but controlling it), and letting them

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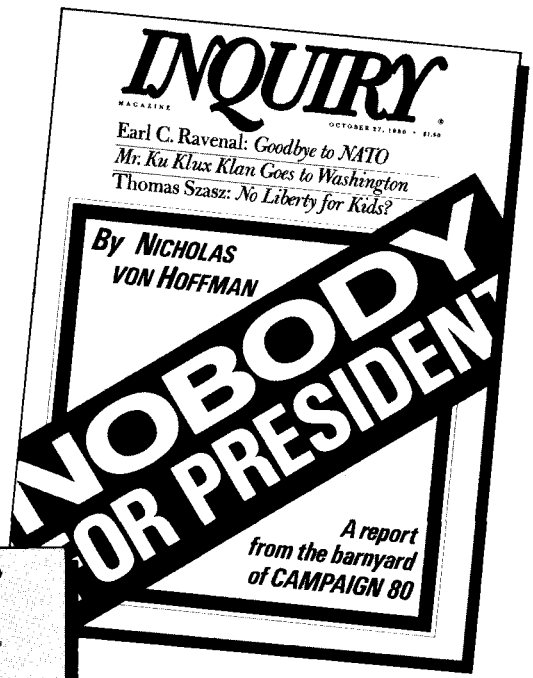
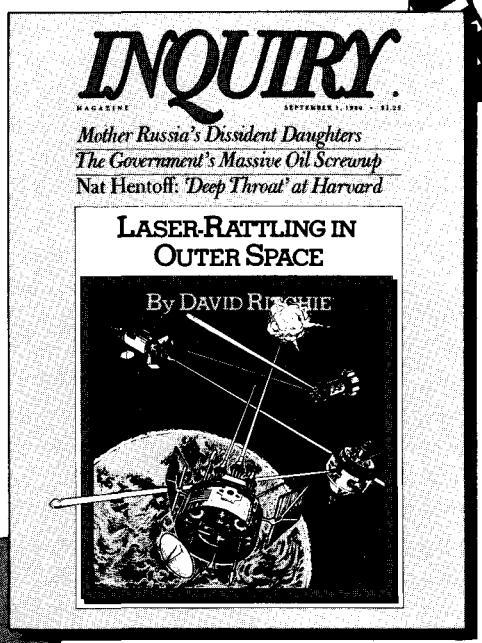
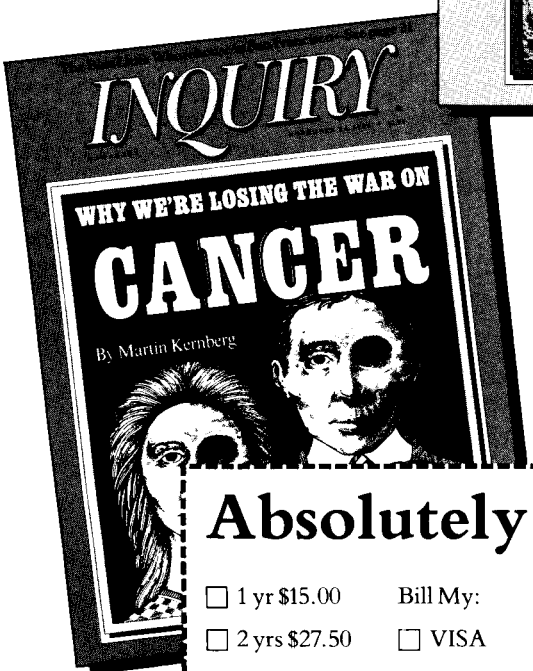
This magazine is too left to be right, and too right to be left.


INQUIRY
MAGAZINE
Earl C. Ravenal: Goodbye to NATO
Mr. Ku Klux Klan Goes to Washington
Thomas Szasz: No Liberty for Kids?
By Nicholas von Hoffman
NOBODY FOR PRESIDENT
A report from the barnyard of CAMPAIGN 80

You think we're kidding? Well, the *New Republic* called us "the best of the right wing rags." But William Safire says we're "a lively, lefty magazine." Maybe George Higgins of the *Boston Globe* got at the real truth. "*INQUIRY* magazine may be addictive," he warned his readers. "Those guys will flog anybody." We're a young magazine with new ideas, and they don't always sit well with people whose thinking has fallen into a rut.





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pay (but losing control), so far we have preferred to pay.

Our European and Japanese friends also prefer to have us pay. They have grown used to the fringe benefits of dependency. But the question facing the United States is whether it is economically possible and politically desirable to maintain the old dependency. The commitments we assumed during the early cold war period rested on the fact that Europe and Japan were devastated, and that the United States was powerful and rich enough to provide for the welfare and defense of the entire non-Communist world. Those conditions, of course, have changed.

Both equity and economic reality decree that the United States cut back some of its overseas commitments. This means turning over to our allies most of the cost of their defense and learning the difference between a vital and a secondary interest. Many of our foreign commitments are based on the outmoded tenets of a doctrine of ideological containment. They blur the distinction between what we might like if we were all-powerful, and what is actually necessary to our security.

We are learning, through the hard lessons of economics, that foreign policy and domestic policy are intimately linked, and that our goals must be consonant with our means. We can continue to sacrifice our economic stability and the well-being of the American people to the pursuit of unattainable foreign ambitions. But the cost will be far greater than it has been in the past. When our means seemed unlimited, we could indulge ourselves in the luxury of pursuing an ideological foreign policy. The economic surplus that permitted such a luxury is gone, and the task confronting us is to apply Lippmann's formula by bringing our commitments into line with our means. The adjustment will not be easy. But if Ronald Reagan wants to lift the heavy hand of government from the economy, he will have to take a hard look at the government's single greatest expense, and at the long-unexamined foreign commitments that underlie it.

Ronald Steel

Appeasing Pretoria won't pay.

Unrealpolitik on Africa

The Reagan administration swept into office promising a foreign policy of coherence, credibility, and strength. But in southern Africa its blustering performance has strained ties to a degree unparalleled since the revelation of NSSM39, the once-secret 1969 Kissinger memorandum proposing a "tilt" toward Pretoria. And the Reagan policy of global containment of the Soviet Union may actually harm American interests in southern Africa and create new opportunities for Soviet advancement.

Despite administration denials, President Reagan has moved steadily toward appeasement of South Africa. The president stated in a March interview with Walter Cronkite that he intends to stand by South Africa—an old ally, he claimed (see "Such Good Friends," by Stephen Cohen, *TNR*, May 2), and a country strategically "essential to the free world in its production of minerals." These comments were followed by the arrival in Washington of a delegation of five senior South African military intelligence officials, who met with UN ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and at least one member of the National Security Council staff. The administration lamely excused this breach of official policy by asserting that the US officials were unaware of the South Africans' military status.

Black Africa views the Reagan administration with alarm. Assistant secretary of State-designate Chester A. Crocker undertook Reagan's first major African policy initiative in an April visit to 11 nations. He was snubbed by Mozambique's head of state; met at the airport in Zambia by a low-ranking official in a pickup truck; greeted by placard-waving demonstrators in Tanzania; and welcomed in Angola by a vitriolic attack on US policy issued by six African presidents. Reagan and Haig, with all their awkward posturing, have shown that in their bipolar view of the world Africa is placed in the midst of a cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, and African regional interests are secondary.

Reagan's new policy on southern Africa calls for the Western five-nation "contact group" (Britain, France, West Germany, Canada, and the US) to abandon its effort to achieve a solution in Namibia on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 435 and for Africa to make further concessions to South Africa. Recently leaked State Department documents drafted by Chester Crocker suggest a *quid pro quo*: "The problem of Namibia, which complicates our relations with our European allies and with black Africa, is a primary obstacle to the development of a new relationship with South Africa. If the South Africans cooperate to achieve an internationally acceptable settlement," it could pave the way for a "a future in which South Africa returns to a place within the regional framework of Western security interests."

The three years of tortuous negotiations for Namibian independence based on Resolution 435 occasionally have come close to bearing fruit. The African states swallowed their reluctance to accept the UN resolution and persuaded Namibia's SWAPO guerrillas to go along with it. But South Africa has refused to commit itself to the transition process. Pretoria has pursued a dual policy, maintaining a dialogue with the Western contact group to keep the door open on negotiations, while creeping toward its own "internal solution." Now the Reagan administration, in an effort to gain the trust and confidence of South

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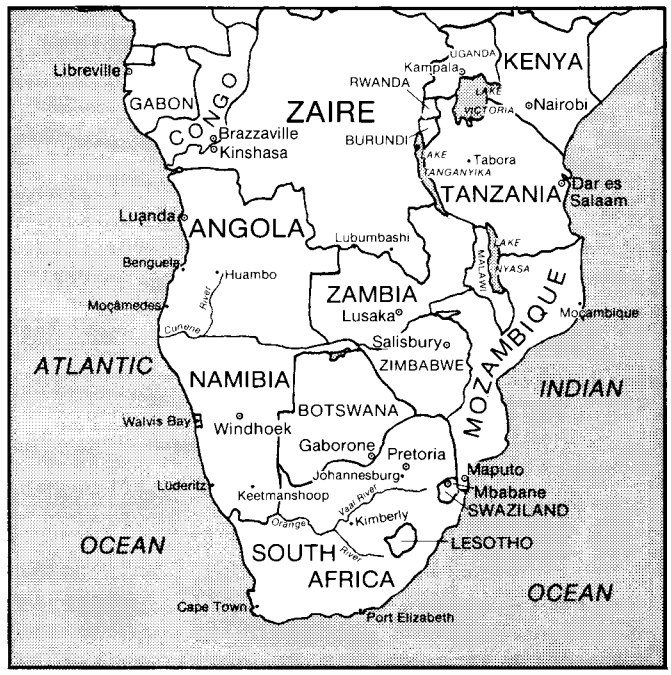
Africa, describes the UN plan as "dead in the water."

Under the new policy, senior US officials are suggesting a "linkage" between withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and a settlement in Namibia. According to a senior official, "the linkage exists, we didn't put it there." UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick told me in an interview that the administration's preferred outcome, "in the best of all possible worlds," would be the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and the inclusion of Jonas Savimbi, leader of the South African-backed UNITA guerrilla force, in a coalition government with the Marxist leaders in Angola. Acording to US officials, this would allay Pretoria's fears of a Communist onslaught. South Africa would then have the confidence to agree to a settlement in Namibia.

But there are a number of problems with this logic. It assumes that Angola's MPLA government can be pressured into such a compromise, and that Savimbi's UNITA force would be strong enough (with the blessing of Washington) to gain legitimacy in a coalition government. The administration has misread the situation. Savimbi, whose base is in the Mbundu ethnic group, operates in the barren scrubland of southeastern Angola and controls no major towns or cities. Recent reports in the British press from defectors from the South African army say that South African units have operated in UNITA drag and that UNITA itself has little more than nuisance value. Angolan officials have often reiterated that they will send the Cuban troops home when there is a settlement in Namibia and when their security problems—continual South African terror raids deep into Angola that have left some 3,000 dead and some 30,000 injured over the past several years—are alleviated.

IF THE REAGAN administration could arrange the withdrawal of Cuban troops in return for a guarantee from South Africa that it would accept free elections in Namibia even if SWAPO wins a majority (as most analysts suggest is likely), the frontline African states and SWAPO conceivably could be dragged into the kind of process that led to independence for Zimbabwe. But the Reaganauts cannot credibly promise to deliver South Africa. According to the leaked confidential minutes of Crocker's meeting with top South African officials, South Africa would have a hard time accepting a SWAPO victory. During his recent visit to the United States, South African prime minister Pieter Botha told the administration that South Africa objects to the proposed 7,500-man UN transitional peacekeeping force which has been a key part of the UN Namibia plan. Botha also told members of the Senate that it might take up to two years to work out constitutional guarantees.

South Africa is too wily to foreclose negotiations. But within the South African establishment, the ministries of defense and of foreign affairs differ about the solution to the Namibia problem. The military tends to



map by Kenneth Grady

see Namibia in a strategic context and views SWAPO participation in a Namibian government as an unacceptable security risk. Hence, they argue, Namibia must remain a buffer, with pro-South African forces in control, so that Pretoria can draw its defense line at the Cunene River (Namibia's northern border with Angola) rather than at the Orange River (Namibia's southern border with South Africa).

In the foreign ministry and elsewhere among the Afrikaner elite there is a more enlightened view that Zimbabwe should be seen as an instructive example of how successful negotiation can lead to a genuinely independent state. Mugabe did not turn out to be the Marxist ogre some imagined. SWAPO, which has a similar nationalist orientation, would inherit an economy even more dependent on South African and Western capital and technology, given its enormous mineral wealth and its need to keep production flowing. Moreover, South Africa would gain some political breathing space by achieving an internationally acceptable solution. It could defuse critics, at least temporarily, while it devises a formula to reform or modernize apartheid at home.

These divisions inside the white minority regime help explain Pretoria's ambiguous behavior with respect to Namibia. South Africa would like an internationally acceptable settlement, but would like it on its own terms. With South Africa drifting to the right, Prime Minister Botha lacks any new mandate for bold moves. Botha's National party saw its share of the popular vote shrink from 68 percent in 1977 to 53 percent in the April elections this year. The Nats retained an overwhelming majority of 131 out of 165 seats in parliament, but the ultra-right opposition made significant gains.

The Reagan administration characterizes South Africa as a society pregnant with reform and making a

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"sincere and honest effort" to alter its apartheid policies. But there is little empirical evidence to support the view that more than cosmetic changes are on the horizon. South African foreign policy has grown increasingly belligerent. In addition to its raids into Angola, Pretoria's state-sanctioned terrorism includes a February raid into the suburbs of Mozambique's capital of Maputo and continued backing for a right-wing terrorist group opposing the Marxist FRELIMO regime in Mozambique.

CHESTER CROCKER, the chief architect of the administration's Africa policy, calls for a strategy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa. But in practice this amounts to a policy of all carrot, no stick. By ruling out "negative pressure" on South Africa (witness last month's veto of UN sanctions against South Africa), the administration is limiting its leverage and is failing to learn the lesson of Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, only months ago the Reaganauts characterized Mugabe and his followers as "Marxist terrorists"—a label they now apply to SWAPO. Then, in a bold move, the administration turned around and committed $225 million in economic aid over the next three years. This is both an investment in what promises to be one of Africa's most resilient economies and an insurance policy against potential Soviet influence.

The Zimbabwe experience flies in the face of the narrow ideological view the Reagan administration has applied to Namibia and Angola. Angola was not only instrumental in pressuring SWAPO to accept the UN plan, but also willing to normalize relations with the US and decrease its dependence on the Eastern bloc. Angola has learned the hard way that the Soviets can supply in part the means to obtain power, but can't help much once it's obtained. Some of Angola's biggest boosters include Gulf Oil, Citibank, the Export-Import Bank, and Arthur D. Little, Inc. Melvin Hill, president of the Gulf Oil Exploration and Production Company, which is pumping some 150,000 barrels a day out of Angola, describes the MPLA government as "businesslike and nonideological" in its dealings with major American firms.

Even if the Clark Amendment—which bans aid to UNITA rebels in Angola—is repealed, Soviet and Cuban influence in Angola will not subside. If anything, given the support Moscow and Havana demonstrate for their allies, it would only increase tensions and the number of Cuban troops. It is "crackpot realism" masquerading as realpolitik. In fact, one practical consequence of lifting the Clark Amendment may be an oil embargo by Nigeria, which supplies 18 percent of our imported oil. Gulf's Melvin Hill told a congressional subcommittee, "Nigeria has already demonstrated that it is willing to use the toughest of measures, including nationalization [they nationalized British Petroleum before the Lancaster House conference on Zimbabwe], boycotts, and embargoes to back up its pursuit of majority rule." And, Hill added, "similar actions might be provoked throughout black Africa, with an adverse effect on US trade, investments, and petroleum supply."

The view of southern Africa as a zero-sum game with the USSR ignores the Soviet experience in Africa. The Russians have been ejected from Egypt, Somalia, Ghana—everywhere they have had a sizable influence. By fearing change and identifying US interests with the status quo, the administration overlooks African national interests. To reduce the conflict in southern Africa to an East-West battle is a self-fulfilling prophecy that enhances Soviet opportunities. This is globalism with a vengeance, and a globalism that fails to appreciate the regional dynamics of a situation is as wrongheaded as regionalism that fails to calculate the global strategic factor. Given the internal dynamics at play in South Africa, "constructive engagement" will give a lot more than it will get. The recent history of decolonization in southern Africa provides ample evidence that an independent Namibia governed by SWAPO and out of South African control will not necessarily constitute a "Soviet advance."

THUS FAR the administration has not made any concrete moves in support of South Africa. Although the South Africans are pleased with the administration's rhetoric about opening "a new chapter in our relationship," they expect the United States to deliver the goods. They are asking for enriched uranium for their French-built Koeberg nuclear reactor, a loosening of Eximbank loan restrictions, and an increase in military-intelligence cooperation. Before agreeing, the administration would do well to take a long, hard look at African realities. Making concessions to Pretoria in return for nothing but vague promises of cooperation will turn South Africa into an albatross around the neck of the administration. A more realistic approach to southern Africa has been proposed by a private commission under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation. The Rockefeller report recommends broadening the arms embargo against South Africa, ending all nuclear collaboration, and halting US investment. The study agrees with the Reagan administration that the United States "has limited leverage," but it argues, "through the use of inducements and pressures . . . [the United States] can encourage positive and discourage negative initiatives by the South African government." By condoning negative initiatives, Reagan is granting South Africa a license for procrastination. Reagan would do well to put aside his overly simplistic phobias about Moscow and see his embrace of South Africa as inimical not only to black African states but to the United States as well.

Robert A. Manning

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Its client is the democratic process.

Let's Keep Legal Services

by David L. Bazelon

America's antipathy toward legal assistance for the poor has a long, if not proud, history. The first legal aid societies were not drawn from the mainstream of our legal culture. They were founded by German immigrants in the mid-19th century, and the organized bar ignored them for nearly half a century. Even in recent decades, the bar's support has been less than wholehearted. In the last 15 years we have witnessed the emergence of government support for legal aid, accompanied by the inevitable public attacks on the program. So the Reagan administration's proposal to recommend "zero funding" for the Legal Services Corporation is only one more chapter in the tattered history of civil legal assistance in the United States.

Those who would abolish Legal Services raise three basic arguments: first, the corporation undermines federalism; second, it has been used for political purposes; and third, its services are a matter not of right but of charity.

The first criticism derives from the "new federalism." Senator Strom Thurmond argues that the federal bureaucracy is wasteful and unresponsive, and that if civil legal assistance is a valuable program, the states will provide it. True, the poor surely would benefit if an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy were removed, and, since the legal problems of Alaskan Eskimos differ from those of Chicago ghetto dwellers, local control seems particularly appropriate for a legal services program. But the values of efficiency and local control are already well served. The federal corporation operates with an overhead of less than two percent. Local offices' daily operations are autonomous. They hire their own personnel and set their own priorities under the direction of local boards made up of private attorneys and poor people. It's hard to see how any agency—federal or state—could better serve the legitimate concerns of federalism.

If returning control to the states will produce no apparent benefits, it will generate risks. Political interference could grow substantially if state governments—which are frequently defendants in legal aid suits—controlled legal aid programs. Consider what happened in California in the late 1960s. The state was successfully sued by farm laborers, with the help of the California Rural Legal Assistance Program. Outraged that federal money could be used to sue state government, then-governor Reagan and Senator George Murphy sought legislation to prevent Legal Services from suing government at *any* level. Imagine the fate of the Legal Services program if Sacramento had controlled its funds. In today's budgetary climate, the programs would fare even worse.

The second major criticism of Legal Services is that it is deeply politicized. Senator Jesse Helms calls it an "outlaw" program staffed by a "gaggle of political activists" who use "public funds to propagate their secular faith." The local offices, in his view, are mere "seedbeds for a hothouse revolution." The revolutionary goals of Legal Services are revealed in such activities as lobbying, class actions, and suits against the government. This last also troubles Senator Russell Long, who says that "the most insane thing I could think of was to hire a lawyer to sue myself." And Senator Orrin Hatch adds that the corporation has gone beyond providing basic legal services for the poor and instead practices "exotic" law.

Stripped of senatorial rhetoric, these statements signal questions worthy of serious attention. The most obvious problem of government-sponsored legal aid—political domination by the government—is not at issue here. In fact, Helms claims that Legal Services is a political servant of forces hostile to our social institutions. Apparently the corporation's founders were all too successful in ensuring its political independence. Yet the question of law reform activities must be reckoned with. Are Legal Services attorneys serving political goals at the expense of clients' interests? Are they bringing frivolous test cases instead of attending to the problems of poor people?

There is a strong sense of *déjà vu* surrounding these arguments. As governor, Reagan made the same claims in his battle with the California Rural Legal Assistance project. A special committee appointed by former president Nixon investigated, and declared the charges "unfounded and without merit." It found that the California legal aid group acted in good faith and in the interests of its clients. The courts that reviewed the suits evidently concurred, for they almost uniformly upheld the claims brought against the state.

The Legal Services Corporation's caseload and budget indicate that the latest charges of political abuse are also unfounded. Activities that might loosely be called "law reform" constitute only a tiny part of its work, probably more for a lack of time than for lack of interest. The program's 6,200 attorneys were swamped with 1.5 million cases last year. Few of these cases were, in Senator Hatch's word, "exotic." The vast bulk of them fell into four areas: divorce and separation;

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custody disputes; Social Security claims; and landlord-tenant matters. Less than two-tenths of one percent of the claims were class actions.

Nor does it appear that Legal Services attorneys are pressing frivolous claims. Legal Services lawyers win 80 to 85 percent of their cases. Judged by that standard, many a distinguished attorney would be guilty of abuse of process. Indeed, with the ample resources at their disposal, private attorneys have a much greater incentive to engage in useless or dilatory litigation. Legal Services attorneys, whatever their political inclinations, have not burdened the courts with unnecessary litigation. Nor have they usurped political power for themselves or for anyone else. Instead, their revolutionary tactics seem to follow the guidelines set by the Constitution: they file legal claims which the courts, guided by Congress's laws, usually find meritorious. Unfortunately for the defendants in these actions, the legal system sometimes works.

Of these defendants, the sorest loser seems to be government. Tens of thousands of suits are brought against the secretary of Health and Human Services. Why, critics ask, should government pay someone to sue government? This is also an understandable question, and one we often have heard before. It is raised whenever a special prosecutor is appointed. The answer is always the same: because no person and no office is above the law. If Congress has conferred certain obligations upon a government department, and corresponding rights upon individual citizens, those citizens must be able to enforce their rights by seeking redress in the courts. This may be the most insane thing Senator Long has ever heard of, but it is also the foundation of our Republic.

THE CURRENT ATTACK on Legal Services goes deeper than efficiency, federalism, or even law reform. Behind many of these criticisms lies a philosophy of law and society that must be confronted, a philosophy that is at the heart of the third critique of Legal Services: that it is a mere charity.

In a recent television interview, budget director David Stockman was asked if cutting back legal aid would disenfranchise poor people. He responded, "I don't believe that there is any entitlement, any basic rights to legal services or any other kind of services." In other words, if the government chooses to provide legal assistance it represents an act of public charity, not an entitlement. And, like other social welfare programs, this charity must be curtailed to restore our national economic health.

Even the staunchest defenders of Legal Services must acknowledge some of Stockman's premises. The Supreme Court does not now recognize a constitutional right to civil legal assistance. And it is true that our legal system requires litigants of all types to bear the burden of retaining counsel—although, as anyone who has hired a lawyer lately can attest, we are almost all indigents for the purpose of obtaining legal services.

Yet Stockman's distinction between entitlements and charity deserves a closer look. Civil legal assistance for the poor may not be a constitutional right. But that should be the starting point, not the end, of the analysis, because the importance of civil legal assistance cannot be separated from the status of individual rights in our society.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS are, of course, fundamental to our system of government. It is not coincidental that the Constitution explicitly offers "to establish justice" as a purpose of its existence. But meaningful access to justice requires something more than a list of rights on a printed page, or the mere establishment of legal institutions. The legitimacy of judicial power rests on the concept of *fair* adjudication. In the criminal law, the Sixth Amendment ties due process to the adversary nature of the legal system. But civil adjudication also depends on the adversary system. Just as incompetent counsel diminishes the integrity of criminal adjudication, the absence of counsel in civil disputes thoroughly undermines the fairness of civil justice. Whether or not there is a constitutional right to civil legal assistance, the availability of counsel may be as important to our system of laws as any discrete constitutional guarantee.

The conditions of modern life make legal representation crucial to the poor, a group generally deprived of education, housing, health care, and jobs. Often they will not even know whether a particular problem has a legal solution. Because of the thin margins on which they live, a solution to their legal problems may be critical to their survival. Many of them depend on government for food, shelter, and health care, and they encounter an enormous range of complex legal questions involving these benefits.

In addition, the poor rarely have access to other legitimate means for solving their problems. The first president of the Legal Services Corporation, Thomas Ehrlich, has noted:

> Wealthy and middle-class persons generally have access to a number of mechanisms when they face a problem. . . . They know how to weave their way through a bureaucratic maze and—if need be—to call upon political help. Most of us have various levers to pull or push before we turn to the law. [But] poor people rarely know where those levers are or how to use them, and—if they do know—they often lack sufficient muscle to make the levers work. For poor people, legal services—if provided—are the first as well as the last resort. They are the only avenue of redress.

A few decades ago the poor had the ear of the local precinct captain, who would informally attend to the legal problems of his ward, providing services ranging from obtaining a pushcart license to meeting bail. These political machines were largely destroyed as a side effect of the New Deal. Government is a fairer, less corrupt source of help—though also a colder one. In any event the great city political machines are dead

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or dying—and with the breakdown of the party organization the poor have few places to turn to but the government and the law.

Consider the case of a typical Legal Services client, Durwood James. The *Washington Post* reported that last July, James was living in a one-bedroom slum dwelling with his emotionally disturbed wife and their newborn baby. In violation of the lease agreement, the landlord constructed a plasterboard wall in the middle of the living room and moved another family into the newly created space. He continued to charge James the same rent. James, who was unemployed at the time, complained for over a month. The living conditions exacerbated his wife's condition, and she deserted the family. Finally, James began to withhold rent. He returned home one afternoon with his daughter to find that the landlord had changed the locks and had stuffed his clothes into two trash bags and left them in the street. James turned first to the police, but they said they could do nothing for him. He could not find the landlord. He was broke. He and his infant daughter spent the night in a downtown park. The next morning a community organization referred him to Legal Services. The Legal Services lawyer obtained a temporary restraining order to ensure that James and his daughter could sleep indoors. The landlord's unlawful action eventually led to an out-of-court settlement.

The poor suffer the gravest harm when access to justice is denied. And in a period of high unemployment and severe cuts in other social services, closing down the neighborhood Legal Services office may not be "cost-effective." The opportunity to enter a court of law and seek redress is a powerful statement to the poor that, notwithstanding their plight, they have a stake in our society. This message was not lost on former president Nixon, who said in signing the Legal Services Corporation into law, "justice is served far better and differences resolved more rationally within the system than on the streets."

But it is our moral principles, not the fear of violence, that should motivate us. Legal assistance for the poor embodies our commitment to the rule of law. It strengthens the fairness of our institutions by permitting all of our citizens to subject them to scrutiny. It gives meaning to our social contract.

The abolition of Legal Services will have consequences for the entire society, not just the poor. Regardless whether an individual seeks to enforce or to challenge a statutory provision, prosecution of a claim through the legal process permits society to confront and consider the choices made by the legislature. Even a simple enforcement action contributes to a fair assessment of our social choices, and contributes to future public decisions on every level: executive, legislative, and, especially, those of the electorate.

When access to justice is denied, this cycle is broken. The base of democratic participation is narrowed, the legitimacy of government weakened. Without civil legal assistance, fewer claims for statutory benefits will be pressed. Important statutes thus will effectively be amended, if not repealed. These amendments will not be effected through the considered judgment of the legislature, as an expression of the popular will. Rather than openly debating legislation, we will simply wait for poverty and ignorance to have their effect. The loss of access to justice will do more than harm the poor and ignorant. It will damage the democratic process itself.

High on the Hog, II

Pelf and Petroleum

by Michael Kinsley

In 1972, Americans purchased about six billion barrels of oil at an average price of $3.39 a barrel. Total cost: $20.3 billion. In 1980, Americans purchased slightly more oil at an average price of $28 a barrel. Total cost: $175 billion. In January 1981, when President Reagan decontrolled domestic oil prices, the cost of imported oil was running about $37.50. Six billion barrels at $37.50 will cost $225 billion. Compared to other goods and services (that is, even after general inflation), oil costs almost six times as much now as it did in 1972. The OPEC "surcharge" for oil amounts to about $820 per American in 1981, or $3,300 for a family of four.

This represents a staggering transfer of wealth over the past few years from American consumers and producers to . . . whom? The first image that comes to mind is of Arab sheiks. But less than 15 percent of the oil Americans consumed last year was bought from Arab nations, and less than 40 percent was imported at all. Throughout the entire oil crisis, well over half the oil consumed by Americans has been sold

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to them by other Americans. Natural gas and coal, virtually all domestic, provide more of our energy than imported and domestic oil combined, and these prices have increased dramatically also.

In other words, most of the vast sums Americans have paid for fossil fuels (still the source of 92 percent of our energy) since 1973 have stayed in this country. Some of this money has paid for higher extraction costs, and some has gone for taxes. But billions have enriched, or further enriched, those who happen to own the energy sources. The Independent Petroleum Association says that only two percent of the population has any stake in oil. (This strikes IPAA as a weighty argument against the windfall profits tax.) In effect, these lucky few are American members of OPEC, profiting just as if they were part of the conspiracy.

OIL PEOPLE tend to see themselves as the most buccaneering sort of capitalists, and to some extent they are. By performing the classic capitalist functions of investment, innovation, and risk-taking, they are helping society deal with the energy crisis, and whatsoever they sow, that do they also reap. But many reap far more than they sow. To the extent that they receive OPEC-level prices for oil that costs far less to pump and remove, their place in economic theory is more akin to that classic enemy of capitalist and laborer alike—the landlord. Economists since David Ricardo have noted that natural resources have value, not because of the work or investment that went into them, but because of their inherent scarcity. The owner of natural resources, the landlord, produces nothing, yet can extract a share of society's production as his "monopoly rent"—or, in today's term, "windfall profit." If you own a scarce natural resource,

> . . . you need do nothing more. You may sit down and smoke your pipe; you may lie around like the lazzaroni of Naples or the leperos of Mexico; you may go up in a balloon, or down in a hole in the ground; and without doing one stroke of work, without adding one iota to the wealth of the community, . . . you will be rich!

Thus Henry George in *Progress and Poverty* (1880). There has never been a more ardent supply-sider than Henry George. Here he is on taxes:

> Taxation which lessens the reward of the producer necessarily lessens the incentive to production. . . . Thus taxation which diminishes the earnings of the laborer or the returns of the capitalist tends to render the one less industrious and intelligent, the other less disposed to save and invest. . . .
>
> If a man build a ship we make him pay for his temerity, as though he had done an injury to the state; if a railroad be opened, down comes the tax-collector upon it, as though it were a public nuisance; if a manufactury be erected we levy upon it an annual sum which would go far toward making a handsome profit. We say we want capital, but if any one accumulate it, or bring it among us, we charge him for it as though we were giving him a privilege.

But as Henry George patiently explained, the owner of natural resources is not a "producer" (oil company self-identifications notwithstanding). The landlord's share of the common product is taken from the productive elements of society, capital and labor. It works just like a tax, reducing the reward for productive effort and thus reducing general prosperity in the manner modern supply-siders have made familiar.

SO HERE IS a whole category of financial inequality that cannot be explained by the classic doctrines of capitalism, and thus cannot support the Reagan administration's "supply-side" solicitude for "creators of wealth." Ownership of natural resources like land or oil does not "create" or "supply" anything. The profit from such ownership is a direct transfer from the rest of society.

Henry George wanted to tax away the landlord's unearned monopoly rents, and use the money to eliminate taxes on the productive sectors of society. This seductive idea still attracts a small band of zealots, which is why anyone who cites Henry George risks getting labeled as a crank. In practice, there would be impossible problems. At this late date, most owners of natural resources did not get them for free, but paid good money in expectation of a reasonable return; the "monopoly rents" have dissolved into the marketplace. And even when the windfall is easy to spot, as in the real estate boom of the 1970s, measuring and collecting it fairly is probably beyond the capacity of democratic government. In general, there is little choice but to allocate monopoly rents to that broader residual category of inequality known as "luck."

But the energy crisis has put the issue in sharper relief, for three reasons. First, there is the magnitude of the windfall. Owning oil property has always been the popular paradigm of good fortune. "The Beverly Hillbillies" became a hit in 1962, when the average

Limousines and Raspberries

The Reagan administration has brought to public policy a new appreciation of luxury and personal enrichment. Supply-side economics holds that these are the vital incentives and rewards for "creators of wealth," who, by hard work, creativity, and daring, enrich society as a whole. Government must take care not to snuff out this pilot light of capitalism through excessive taxation. Concern about inequality is misguided, self-defeating, ultimately harmful to poor and rich alike.

This is the second in a series of articles examining whether consumers of wealth are really creators of wealth as well.

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Welcome to Petrolopolis

Houston

Like a latter-day Oz, downtown Houston rises glittering from the steamy pine forests of the Texas gulf. The most distinctive shape of Houston's mid-1970s boom, Philip Johnson's dark jade geometric Pennzoil towers, already has been eclipsed in I. M. Pei's and Gerald Hines's gleaming marble-clad 70-story Texas Commerce headquarters. The *Houston Post*, natives will tell you, now has the third largest circulation in Detroit: snowbelters are scouring the want ads for Texas jobs. The black gold rush gives Houston a frontier boom-town atmosphere with a cosmopolitan flair. There are plenty of plainspoken, string-tied Texas oil men in the downtown banks and clubs, but in the chic Galleria shopping area, Mercedeses litter the vast parking lots. Italian interests are building twin 30-story condominiums. No mortgages. Cash only, please.

Houston has become the urban incarnation of the supply-siders' vision of America. Decontrol of American oil and gas exploration and the past year's doubling of world energy prices have fueled the growth of an already booming town. American oil companies and individuals will spend about $35 billion on exploration this year. Yet despite this drilling boom, total oil and gas reserves for US oil companies fell about four percent last year. Visions of the Red Army on the high road to Tehran or Communist cell meetings in the Petite Trianon obviously encourage Italians to buy Texas condos, and with money kept in Houston's marbled skyscrapers.

Any gold rush attracts its retinue of charlatans, bankers, and lawyers. The *ne plus ultra* for bright young financiers is no longer a trip to visit central banks in Warsaw or Rio but a visit with Texas geologists about the Permian basin or (harder to visit as it's under water) the Tuscaloosa trend. An unquenchable thirst for knowledge to allow banks and brokers to pursue the oil dollar has inspired locals to expand the halls of higher hydrocarbon education. At fashionable in-town resorts like the Houstonian, bankers can pay New York City prices and run on outdoor carpeted jogging paths while enrolled in crash oil seminars. Gaggles of pasty bankers survey rigs drilling away in the Houston exurbs while pagan roughnecks gaze down at their benefactors from their steel ramparts with a mixture of bemusement and incredulity that anyone could have shirts so white. No doubt this year's update of *The Preppie Handbook* will contain a section devoted to defining arcane oil argot such as anticline, sandfrac, and slush pit as it becomes *de rigueur* for Horatio Alger's bright young successors.

If bankers are pleased with this new Jerusalem, the legal profession finds itself in the Elysian fields. Obscure state laws governing mineral rights, leasing customs open to multiple interpretations, and general scheming bred by sky-high prices and greed have created a whole new legal universe. Oil production literally gives a new dimension to leasing; people lease oil property not only by latitude and longitude but by strata. Oil men delight in buying and reselling leases while retaining percentages, and with each physical or metaphysical machination comes a new opportunity for fraud, misrepresentation, and legal billings. Exxon retains a modest in-house legal staff of over 900.

The native Houstonian plutocracy who for the most part have waxed ever wealthier with the oil boom aren't quite sure what to make of this new prosperity. Houston's horrendous traffic jams don't really affect businessmen living in their River Oak enclave, which remains a close-in verdant island as the less fortunate settle ever farther afield on the Texas plains. Houston natives can carefully schedule shopping sprees to the Galleria to avoid the crowds and retreat to the timeless tranquility of the River Oaks Country Club or the Houston Country Club when the world is too much with them. Old-line Houston considers itself more southern than western, allied culturally to New Orleans rather than Dallas; the frontier of cowboys and chicanos begins somewhere past the halfway point to San Antonio. Houston has always been a little self-conscious about being nouveau riche; its initial growth early in the century came about because it was willing to encourage oil business while a more conservative Beaumont wouldn't. A couple of generations of wealth have given its brassy early years a patina of respectability; this new blast of great wealth is refreshing, but it is unsettling to the recently gentrified group. The passage of time, the creeping kudzu, and a Texas Henry James may some day soften this jumble of freeways, skyscrapers, money, and ambition, but for today, oil, Adam Smith, and Red Adair reign supreme.

David Kemper

David Kemper is a Kansas City banker.

wellhead price of crude oil was $2.90 a barrel. Now it is 13 times that amount. Second, this windfall is so clearly a simple transfer from the rest of society. The same is true of land profits and all other monopoly rents, but it takes a bit of economic theory to understand why. With oil, we see it happening before our eyes at the gas pump. Third, this colossal windfall derives, not from the process of social growth described by David Ricardo, but from a classic price-setting conspiracy. If American justice could reach the official members of OPEC, they would be in jail. Charge: crimes against capitalism. Our law considers their method of extracting money from people just as antisocial as stealing it at gunpoint. Yet most of the money OPEC extorts from Americans goes to other Americans.

This is not an argument for restoring oil price controls. OPEC sets the cost to society as a whole of consuming an extra barrel of oil, and thus the value to society of conserving or replacing it. Individual consumers should face the same cost, to encourage conservation, and oil drillers should be offered a similar price for new oil, to encourage domestic extraction. Likewise, this is not a argument for *ressentiment* against all of those who are enriching themselves off the energy crisis. Much of the profit from the oil boom is

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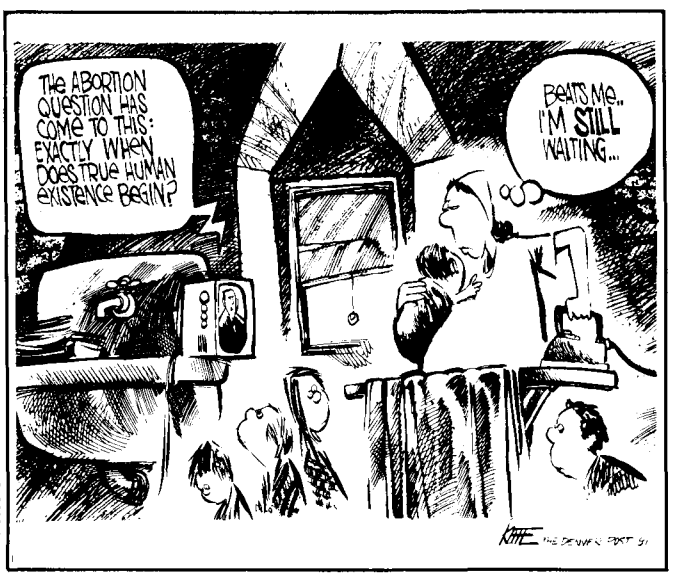
not "monopoly rents" at all, but a fair return for investment of money and effort in a high-risk field.

On the other hand, the unique economic role of natural resources explains why we needn't take seriously all the moans and groans about the windfall profits tax. And it suggests that those making huge fortunes from oil these days might benefit from a little modest reflection on the nature of their triumph, and a more generous attitude toward those at whose expense they are getting rich.

While the northeast and midwest stagnate, Texas and other oil states prosper. Businesses catering to high-level personal consumption proliferate: fancy stores and restaurants, resorts, and so on. How much of the oil boom is based on monopoly rents, as opposed to productive capitalist activity?

Not long ago, oil folks were happily and profitably pumping away at less than four dollars a barrel. Now they can get almost $40 a barrel. The oil industry likes to suggest that its costs have been climbing right along with oil prices over the past eight years. As the easy oil gets used up, it must be replaced with oil from deeper wells, or oil from wells in less accessible locations, or oil coaxed from old wells by fancy extraction techniques. But a little creative inference from the industry's own data offers a different picture from the one in, for example, those Chevron television commercials showing thousands of little dollar signs pouring into the ground for each little jigger of oil that squirts back up.

At the end of 1973, the oil industry reported 35.3 billion barrels of "proved reserves" in the United States. Proved reserves are defined as oil that can be extracted "with reasonable certainty . . . under existing economic and operating conditions." Or, as an industry publication explains, it is oil that can be "produced [sic] . . . from wells already drilled, given the price of crude oil . . . at the time the estimate is made." These estimates tend to be conservative, since the industry wants people to believe that oil is getting harder and harder to find. So at the beginning of the energy crisis, there were at least 35.3 billion barrels in the ground that could be extracted profitably at the current price, which was $3.89 a barrel.



Mike Keefe

What has happened to all that pre-crisis oil? Well, from 1974 through 1980, about 20 billion barrels of oil were extracted in the United States. This means that owners of oil could have been pumping away since the energy crisis began at no increased cost, except for inflation, and still would have plenty of this cheap oil to sell now for $40 a barrel. Of course some of the oil we've consumed since 1973 has been from reserves added after 1973. (In 1980, only 16 percent of domestic extraction was so-called "old" oil.) But this means even more $3.89 oil remains to be sold today.

Besides this pre-crisis oil, there are 9.3 billion barrels that have been added to United States "proved reserves" between 1973 and 1979, either through new discoveries or through revisions of previous estimates. By definition, this oil could be extracted, with a profit, for the going price at the time. And as recently as two years ago, the highest price for oil was half of what it is today.

OIL COMPANIES must calculate their actual costs and revenues per barrel each year for the Securities and Exchange Commission. Shell, for example, reported an average price of $20.83 for domestic oil it sold in 1980, of which $4.06—20 percent—was profit, *after taxes*. Not bad. But wait. This reflected the supposedly onerous windfall profits tax, which came to $2.77 a barrel. Without it, the after-tax profit per barrel would have been $6.83 or 33 percent. And Shell's costs included $1.20 per barrel for exploration, allocated to 1980 sales even though the oil discovered in 1980 "will be produced [sic] in future periods" (says a footnote) and sold at a much higher price (left unsaid). Shell's calculated costs for "production" (i.e., extraction) also have a suspicious way of keeping up with price increases. In 1980 they were $4.67 a barrel, yet just a year earlier they were only $2.20.

So any way you figure it, there are plenty of monopoly rents in the oil business these days. Who is getting them? Three categories of people: stockholders of the major oil companies, independent oil operators, and royalty owners. Royalty owners are people who've signed away the right to drill for oil on their property, in exchange for a share (generally one-eighth) of the revenues. In 1979, about 70 percent of domestic oil was extracted by the majors, 30 percent by the independents. Private landowners get royalty payments on about three-quarters of domestic extraction. (Another 15 to 20 percent involves royalty payments to federal, state, or local governments.)

The major oil companies have endured the greatest vilification in recent years, and no doubt the executives of these firms have done their fiduciary best to mislead the citizenry and pervert public policy. They also have done quite well for their stockholders. Most of the majors recorded total returns to their investors last year (stock appreciation plus dividends) of better than

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50 percent. Shell's was 120 percent. But the majors are, after all, widely owned and openly traded. Their past profits have been spread among millions of people, and anyone who spies more exceptional profits ahead is free to stake a claim. These days, about $65 will buy you a share of Exxon and the same proportional opportunity for monopoly rents as the richest Rockefeller.

BY CONTRAST, the independent oil "producers" (those not affiliated with refining and retail operations) have gotten a public-relations free ride, thanks to the anthropomorphic fallacy that little companies must be owned by little people. The average stockholder of an independent is far wealthier than the average stockholder of Mobil or Exxon, and many of the very richest people in the country got that way by owning "little" oil companies. Marvin Davis of Denver recently tried to buy 20th Century-Fox for $700 million *cash*, $600 million of which he had just been paid for oil and gas property he owned in several western states. When one of the owners of a small, family-owned company, Belridge Oil, died in 1975, she willed some of her stock to a foundation, to be used for charitable works in Marin County, California. She thought she was leaving five or ten million dollars for this eccentric purpose. When Belridge was sold to Shell for $3.65 billion four years later, the foundation suddenly had $253 million to dispose of among the deserving poor of Marin. The remaining $3.4 billion stayed in the family.

Because they are seen, absurdly, as somehow more deserving or less greedy, the independents enjoy a lower rate of windfall profits tax than the majors. They also continue to enjoy the oil percentage depletion allowance, a racket that finally was discontinued for the majors in 1975.

There has been a rash of newspaper stories lately about poor dirt farmers in Louisiana or widows in Texas who sign royalty agreements with oil and gas developers, and suddenly have money for a new chicken coop or a Winnebago for trips to visit the children. Very touching. Many royalty owners, of course, are doing somewhat better than that, and even the most modest royalty payment is pure monopoly rent. The standard royalty on one small well producing 15 barrels a day is worth over $2,000 a month. This windfall does not fall from the sky. It falls from the pockets of energy consumers, including the vast majority of dirt farmers, widows, orphans, and so on. Yet last year, Congress gave royalty owners a $1,000 income tax credit against any windfall profits tax they might have to pay and probably it will increase that credit, or exempt royalty owners completely, in this session.

The purpose of the windfall profits tax is to reclaim for consumers and real producers some of the monopoly rents they are paying to oil extracters. The *Wall Street Journal*, which greeted the windfall tax last year with a black-bordered editorial entitled "The Death of Reason," was at it again last month, commenting:

> Oil economists say that the incidence of the tax is falling about equally on the consumers, who pay the tax through prices at the pump, and on the oil companies, which have to reduce their retained earnings that otherwise would have gone toward new investment.

This is tripe. Perhaps these "oil economists" have never read Adam Smith, but surely the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* have done so. They know perfectly well that, under decontrol, consumers will have to pay the full OPEC price for domestic oil *whether or not* there is a windfall profits tax. Domestic suppliers cannot make them pay more and need not let them pay less. And true free marketeers also should know that rational investment decisions are based on how much money you think you can make in the future, not how much you've "retained" in the past. The oil industry is not short of cash.

THE ONLY legitimate concern about a windfall profits tax is that it could make domestic oil extraction unprofitable. This one does not. It takes a percentage of the difference between the sales price and a "base price," set with comic exactitude and then indexed for inflation. For oil in the reserves before 1979, the lowest base price is $12.81 and the highest tax rate is 70 percent. So at a decontrolled price of $38 a barrel, my calculator says that the most anyone will have to pay is about $17.50, leaving net revenues of about $20. But this is oil that, by definition, could be extracted profitably at prices ranging from below three dollars to a high of less than $15. So the tax is no disincentive to keep on pumping.

The tax on "new" oil (newly discovered, or removed from old wells by costly new techniques) is just 30 percent, and the base price is $16.55 plus inflation *plus* two percent. (Got that?) On $38 oil, the tax might be as high as $6.50, leaving a mere $31.50 to someone who took the trouble to extract it. Now it's possible that there is oil somewhere in this country that could be extracted profitably for, say, $35 and will stay in the ground instead because of this tax. But just at the moment, there isn't a drilling rig or an oil geologist available to find out, since even $31.50 a barrel remains strangely tempting, so that problem is pretty hypothetical.

The windfall tax recovers just a small fraction of the monopoly rents that some Americans are collecting courtesy of OPEC. It is riddled with special exemptions and favored categories, and it doesn't apply at all to natural gas and coal, where similar profits are being made. Congress has provided that the tax will phase out after raising the pointlessly precise figure of $227.3 billion. By contrast, US proved reserves already have a market value of a trillion dollars. The process of extracting them and finding more is "creating wealth," all right, but only in the Neiman-Marcus sense.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Killers and Consumers

I don't often go to scary films, for two contradictory reasons: they usually don't scare me; and I don't really enjoy being scared. (I realize that this means I'm a repressed masochist, just as the fact that I respond to women means that I'm a repressed homosexual.) I go to a scare flick occasionally, sometimes for reasons I don't quite understand, but I know why I went to *The Fan*.

Scare pictures come in at least three categories: fantasy, like one that's going around (unseen by me) in which a man's severed hand pursues him; supernatural, like *The Exorcist*; it-could-really-happen, like *Jaws*. *The Fan* is Category Three, and I went to it for the same obvious reason that made its distributors nervous, the John Lennon murder. (Although the film was virtually finished before that killing, they were wary of charges of exploitation.) I went for a sort of topical echo.

And the picture does dramatize fundamental facts about the Lennon murder and of gunnings since: no one is ultimately safe from a homicidal maniac who wants to get him/her, and the attack—particularly on the prominent—comes as often from warped admiration as from hate. *The Fan* was adapted from a novel of Bob Randall's by Priscilla Chapman and John Hartwell; the situation is strong, the script is not. The dialogue is machine-made, and the paddings stick out as paddings. The plot tells of a New York theater star, a woman, and a young man, unknown to her, whose obsession with her becomes violent. The fan's role has a line of action, full enough; the star's role, which fundamentally is only reaction to the fan's action, has to be padded with sub-plot and personal touches, all of which are bad. The authors give her a divorced husband who, in the course of the story, discovers that he has made a mistake in leaving her for a young woman and returns. The authors also come up with that nadir in platitudes, the quarrel between the star and her devoted secretary after which they regret losing their tempers and hug. And of course there are the rehearsals for the star's new show—her first musical—in which everyone just adores her to pieces. She's so Humble, so Regular-Guy. (The star is played by Lauren Bacall, and those singing-dancing numbers are not exactly a come-on for her current Broadway musical.)

Also, the plot has gaps of credibility, which I think you're supposed not to notice or at least not to point out. For example, the fan slashes another young man in a YMCA swimming pool. How does he get away? Then he ravages the star's apartment. How does he get in?

Still the picture has its disquieting chills, for five reasons. First, the director, Edward Bianchi, who makes his feature debut here, has worked for a distinctive visual style. It's a style that depends thematically on intense close-ups, so, predictably, some critics have written it off as the curse of Bianchi's background in TV commercials. But Bianchi is using his experience, not being used by it: he confines his use of these close-ups almost entirely to the plot strand of the fan himself. Thus throughout the picture we see him and the objects around him with abnormal intensity. Far from being the jittery desperation that close-ups often are with newcomers, here they become a visual system that underscores the content—as in the very first shots under the credits when the camera pans slowly around the fan's room and fills the screen with his objects of attack, his typewriter, his penknife.

Second, closely linked with this, the cinematography of the Englishman Dick Bush, who is now working in the US. (As I recall, Bush did the fine black-and-white work on Jonathan Miller's memorable BBC-TV film of *Alice in Wonderland*.) Third, the music by Pino Donaggio. From the moment that the low strings cut in jaggedly under the credits, the score is original and commanding. Fourth, the editing by the adroit Alan Heim, who did *Hair* and *Lenny*. Heim's frequent fast fades to black sustain, between scenes, the presence of threat even when nothing is specifically threatening at the moment. Fifth, Michael Biehn as the fan. Biehn, whose few previous films I haven't seen, brings to this part precisely the clean-cut, malted-milk sincerity that makes his psychosis all the more horrible. In one especially well-done early scene, his sister (Kaiulani Lee) comes to his apartment to tell him how worried his family is about him. He doesn't let her in. Bianchi holds the two profiles, so much alike, in one close shot as she pleads. Two 4-H faces, separated by a half-open door. The moment was perceived cinematically.

One other important visual effect is used throughout. Biehn's little apartment wall is plastered with photographs of the star—since she is played by Lauren Bacall, of course those photos are stills and press shots from Bacall's career. He even refers to the famous (Bacall) shot of her sitting on a piano being played by President Truman. Yet the star today is shown ruthlessly as an aging woman. This running contrast between the star then and the star now

Films Worth Seeing

Bustin' Loose. Richard Pryor. Patchwork sentimental script which at least gives Pryor plenty of chances to strut his hilarious stuff.

Café Express. Pleasant Italian comedy, new but reminiscent of 1960s "common man" films. Nino Manfredi restrained and appealing.

Lion of the Desert. Stirring, largely accurate historical action spectacle, about Bedouin resistance to Italian conquerors in the 1920s. Anthony Quinn stalwart as the real-life resistance leader

Oblomov. Emphases are shifted in this Soviet version of the great Goncharov novel, but much of the result is empathic and moving.

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underscores the fan's imperviousness to reality.

Bacall's chief contribution is her willingness to be photographed thus frankly. Her acting as such is forced and clumsy. In private she may be, for all I know, the competent, candid, and compelling person the press says she is; on screen her fabrication of that persona is painful. Her early film stardom came chiefly through a peculiar sexiness. Now that it's gone, she's stripped down to the fact that she has no technique, not even much untrained talent. Her work is amateur.

Maureen Stapleton, who plays the secretary, is not amateur, just resigned. Once she was an actress of some energy and appeal, but she has become only a stout stumbler after pathos, a saleswoman of "heart." Bacall's failure is ignorance, Stapleton's is merchandising.

"Bourgeois" is a risky adjective for a critic to use pejoratively. How many proletarian or aristocratic critics are there? Or truly radical critics? (By "truly" I mean those other than tenured professorial Marxists.) So if I call *The Four Seasons* a bourgeois comedy, I don't look down on it from Olympus. Its characters' aims and values are certainly not mine: their milieu and short-term pleasures certainly are. The differences could not be more important; the resemblances keep one mortal.

Alan Alda wrote and directed *The Four Seasons*, and did neat work both ways. Alda, one of the huge TV successes, put together a script with such a simple idea that it depends entirely on its dialogue and performances to keep it lively. Three middle-class, early-middle-aged couples go away on holidays together in spring, summer, fall, and winter. (The music throughout is Vivaldi—bits of *Le Quattro Stagioni*, naturally, and bits of other pieces.) Outside of squabbles and accidents, nothing really happens, except that, after the first vacation, one of the men splits with his wife, and on the next three trips he brings along the young woman he's now living with. But Alda keeps the whole thing buzzing with lots of pert dialogue as glitzy as most of Neil Simon, and the script is much like Simon in characterization. That is, each of the six principals is given characteristics, but only to distinguish one person from another and to provide grounds for minor ruptures and healings, not because Alda originally set out to write about a man who's overly judgmental, another who's slightly paranoiac, etc. The traits are only décor—you can almost hear Alda saying as he typed, "Now what shall I give *this* one?"—but they serve their purpose.

That purpose, the real purpose, is genuinely good, better than the picture as a whole. It's Alda's direction. I don't mean his camera work, although that, except for a few strained shots through leaves and branches, is straightforward (and his editor, Michael Economou, has helped him keep the line brisk and clear). It's his work with his actors, including himself, that's extraordinary. Excepting the newcomer girl, Bess Armstrong, who isn't very skillful, and allowing for the fact that one of the basic six, Len Cariou, has a face distinguished by indistinction, the sextet play together very, very enjoyably. Alda, Cariou, and Jack Weston are the men, Carol Burnett, Sandy Dennis, and Rita Moreno are the women, and they really keep the ball in the air. I'd guess that some of the group scenes had a good deal of improvisation in them, based on a script, and these six pros overlap and undercut and top one another like a real ensemble.

I thought of the French *Vincent, François, Paul and the Others* and the Italian *We All Loved Each Other So Much*, and would bet that Alda knows them. (He even includes a soccer game—European football—among the couples, as if to prove a link.) But neither of those European films dared to have as little plot as this one, and neither had a last gag like this one, involving a Mercedes sedan. Really funny, and a really pertinent last crack at a consumer society.

Reconsideration.

The Emergence of Edith Wharton

by Marilyn French

Edith Wharton is one of America's finest novelists; during her lifetime she was highly respected, well known, and successful. But since her death 40 years ago her work has been largely neglected: only a few of her books remain in print. Few writers of quality have suffered such an eclipse. There have been intermittent efforts, by critics like Edmund Wilson and Irving Howe, to resuscitate her reputation, and indeed there has been increasing interest in Wharton's work recently. But some of the very people who have attempted to revive such interest are responsible for impeding that process, by writing essays tainted with undisguised patronization for this "lady writer," and by approaching her work negatively. That is, critics frequently direct more attention to what Wharton did not do than to what she did do. They have skirted the task of focusing and elucidation which is surely the first business of criticism.

But part of the reason for our long neglect of Edith Wharton may also be that, without a change in certain attitudes, it was difficult to recognize her central concerns. One of her more perceptive critics, Blake Nevius, writing in 1953, accused Wharton of a "lurking feminism." Feminist concerns do appear in her work, although she did not associate herself with the feminist movement of her time. She wrote frequently of the way in which women were educated to become ornaments, mindless and self-regarding, not people but products. The double sexual standard chafes some of her female characters. And one of her major themes—constriction—appears most powerfully when it is linked with the rules governing the lives of women. Whether she writes about lives lived narrowly inside social constrictions, or in isolation outside of them, Wharton is subtle, delicate, and precise. The seeming innocence of male critics about the difference between a woman's life and a man's, about the profound effects of learning to adapt the self to a small anteroom in life, has led to an impercip-

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Marilyn French is the author, most recently, of *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (Summit). This essay will appear in longer form as the introduction to *The House of Mirth*, issued in paperback by Berkley Books. ©1981 Marilyn French.

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ience about Wharton's work. She does not shout: therefore she is not heard. (Had she shouted, she would not have been published.)

SHE WAS born Edith Newbold Jones, in 1862, to an old New York family that was part of the "elite," the aristocracy almost, of this young country. This class, modeled on the British gentry, had essentially bourgeois standards although gentlemen did not work, except for a few who interested themselves in law, banking, or government. Ladies spoke softly and took care to be ornamental. Gentlemen sat at table after dinner drinking port or madeira while the ladies withdrew to (with-) drawing rooms which (as Edith's mother once said, criticizing one of her early literary efforts) were always tidy.

At root, the greatest sin was feeling. One did not express feeling; one did not even discuss it. People whose work was the expression of feeling—artists, writers, actors—were as déclassé as tradesmen. Strenuous exertion was acceptable only in amateur sports. Utterly secure economically, permitted to marry only within the group—thus tight and cohesive socially and sexually—this class owned its world. Any sign of need, whether it be a shabby gown or a passion for painting, was a betrayal of class. To care about anything too much was to admit that this small, isolated, independently wealthy group of people was not in fact independent, invulnerable, sufficient to itself on all occasions, superior to and untainted by the concerns and cravings of ordinary humanity.

This society was not without its virtues. It adhered to a high standard of probity in financial affairs; it had a clear code of manners, respect for good taste, and it was unpretentious, wearing its opulence quietly. It maintained, for good or ill, a rigid code of sexual mores and a double standard. Above all, its stability and narrowness granted its members the pleasures of security and continuity. It also offered the pain of suffocation. In the years when Edith Wharton was weaning herself from its values, she was frequently ill: a major symptom was the inability to breathe, a sense of stifling.

The young Edith Jones was passionate, willful, and fascinated by literature—by her own "making-up" of tales and by the books in her father's library. She was born late (her brothers were 12 and 16) in the life of a woman who had

Edith Wharton by David Schorr

grown up feeling inferior, shy, and deprived, and who seems to have surrounded her daughter with a climate of cold disapproval. Her father was warmer, but still remote; a gentle dilettante, he suffered from ill health as Edith grew up and he died when she was 19. He provided part of her knowledge of constriction and waste: in her memoir, *A Backward Glance*, she wrote, "I have wondered since [his death] what stifled cravings had once germinated in him, and what manner of man he was really meant to be. That he was a lonely one, haunted by something always unexpressed and unattained, I am sure."

Education in Wharton's class was desultory. Young men received formal training, and sometimes even read law, but were expected to have a smattering of knowledge about many things without strong interest in any one thing. Young women were taught the social arts and perhaps a foreign language. The Jones family was fastidious about spoken and written English, but Edith was not formally educated. The family's theory was that education should not fatigue the brain: concentration was as frowned upon as emotion. But the young girl read widely in the books available to her (and continued to do so, ranging into many disciplines, throughout her life), and, during long periods of travel abroad with her parents, she learned several foreign languages.

She failed the standards of her world from the beginning. Her powerful intelligence and nature seem to have appalled her mother. That Lucretia Jones did not believe Edith was entitled to independent existence is suggested by

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several biographical details, most significantly by the fact that, in her announcement of her daughter's wedding, she omitted Edith's name.

The child's awareness that she was different (which always, for a child, is equivalent to feeling wrong), her mother's disapprobation, and her father's distance and ineffectuality combined to induce in the young girl a strong need to conform, to adhere to the standards of her society. She suffered severely from phobias. She tried hard to resist the temptation to what she called the "ecstasy" of "making up": "The call came regularly and imperiously and I . . . would struggle against it conscientiously." She learned to defer to her mother, and to hide or repress her interests, sexuality, emotions, and will.

When Edith was 23, she married Edward ("Teddy") Wharton, an amiable 33-year-old from a suitable family. She spent the early years of their marriage acting as a woman of her class was supposed to act. She dressed well, decorated a series of houses, paid visits, entertained, and traveled in Europe with her husband. In her youth she had written poetry, squirreling away sheets of brown wrapping paper to write on because the family did not provide her with paper. But when she married, she stopped writing.

Gradually, she distanced herself from her mother, emotionally and physically. She took a Newport residence at a distance from Lucretia's; she bought a New York townhouse as far from her mother's as was respectable. Eventually, she entirely deserted Newport, the social center for summer activities, and built a mansion in Lenox, Massachusetts. Here, she threw her formidable energies into designing and decorating the house, The Mount, and its gardens.

Not until 1889, when she was 27, did she begin to write again. Her poems were immediately accepted by *Scribner's* magazine. A year later, she wrote some short stories, which were also published by *Scribner's*. She was tremendously excited by her success in these ventures, though she later wrote, "I continued to live my old life, for my husband was as fond of society as ever, and I knew of no other existence."

She continued to write, but fitfully. She was often ill (she could not breathe) and would lapse into long silences. In 1893, Edward Burlingame of Scribner's suggested publishing a volume of her short stories. She was overwhelmed by the idea, and when he rejected some of her choices, she fell into a depressed silence. Again, she was ill. After a few years, she felt able to write again, but what she wrote (with co-author Ogden Codman) was *The Decoration of Houses* (1897)—an appropriate subject for a "lady." The following year she had a severe nervous breakdown. This was treated with bed rest, massage, large meals, and separation from Teddy. She recovered, and in 1899 her first volume of short stories, *The Greater Inclination*, was finally published.

She wrote of this event that it "broke the chains which had held me so long in a kind of torpor. For nearly 12 years I had tried to adjust myself to the life I had led since my marriage; but now I was overmastered by the longing to meet people who shared my interests." She filled her home with guests of intellect and sensibility. During her travels in Europe, she had gradually created a network of friends who were her equals; she now added to this group people with whom she could discuss art, literature, science, music. She gained confidence in herself, a sense that she could—was able to, was allowed to—write. Her first novel, *The Valley of Decision*, was published in 1902. She was 40.

Up to this point, Edith Wharton's life sadly repeats a pattern found in the lives of many women writers. An inadequate education made up for privately, even secretly; a painfully slow development into physical womanhood, hedged with guilt and a sense of being different; attempts to fit into social roles resulting in illness, physical and/or emotional; attempts to break out of societal constrictions, resulting in illness, physical and/or emotional. Above all she (and many other women writers) suffered from a deep, drenching sense of illegitimacy. Intellect and talent made them feel inadequate as women; womanhood made them feel inadequate as writers. Society offered no way out for such women: each of them had to break the internalized mold herself, often in the face of opposition from the world around her; or let the mold break her. Critics who discuss

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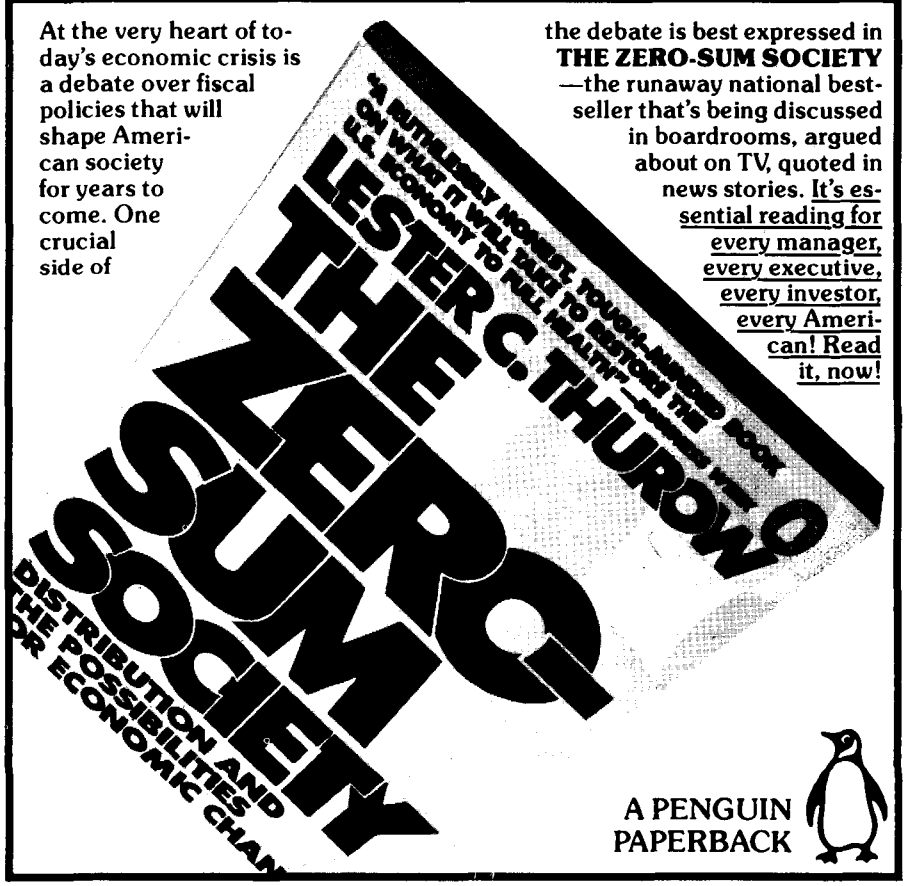
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A PENGUIN PAPERBACK

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Edith Wharton usually describe her struggle as being against the conventions of her class, but those conventions were far stricter for women than for men; her problem was one of gender as much as one of class.

Once she began to take her life in her hands, however, she was prodigious. She picked it up and shaped it to her desire. She moved to Paris; she wrote daily. She had her first love affair when she was in her mid-40s, tapping at last her stifled, passionate nature. She created a splendid life, crowded and rich; she had her work, a huge circle of friends, brilliant discussion and argument, beautiful living quarters and clothes, devoted servants, beloved pets, a motorcar. The car was important, for Wharton lived in a flurry, impetuously gathering together some friends and motoring through the Berkshires, or down to Italy, or to the south of France.

From all reports, Teddy Wharton had been a sunny-natured man, a lover of society, of dogs and the outdoors, happiest when he was fishing or hunting. That the couple had no sex life did not (nor was it supposed to) disturb their mutual good manners. He does not seem at any early time actively to have impeded his strong-willed wife. Once she took control of her life, however, Teddy began to feel out of place. She had stifled in his world; now he was stifling in hers. He had odd breakdowns, as odd as hers had been. He would return to America while she was in Paris, and the couple would live apart for long periods. They had always lived mainly on her money—inherited and earned—and Teddy embezzled some of it and proceeded to live a scandalous life in Boston—scandalous, that is, for those times, in that it was openly sexual. Edith Wharton had a horror of divorce and tried for some years to keep up at least a social front but eventually the couple did split up. She continued to live in France, surrounded by friends and her special friend, Walter Berry (it is unclear whether they were ever lovers), for the rest of her life.

When World War I broke out, Wharton threw herself into it with all her energy. She founded an *atelier* to help Frenchwomen thrown out of work by war-related events, and eventually employed 100 of them. She established hostels for the Belgian refugees pouring into Paris, and helped 9,000 of them in the first year alone. She visited the front lines many times. She organized a committee to rescue children orphaned or lost because of the war; her group bathed, clothed, fed, and solaced the young victims. She opened a home for children stricken with tuberculosis. She wrote articles, arranged benefit concerts, rummage sales, art exhibitions, and pounded the doors of the rich to raise money for these undertakings. She gave so generously of her own fortune that she would have anxieties about money when the war was over. It was an extraordinary effort, performed without pretension, superiority, or sniffing martyrdom: she was simply a woman doing something that had to be done. When the war was over, she was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government.

Afterward, she returned to her old life. She created two homes for herself, one north of Paris, one in the south of France. The postwar years were, however, tinged with sadness which increased as she aged. Beloved friends, beloved servants died. Customs and manners changed, and she began to feel out of place in the new world. Maintaining a set of dependents and her two estates with her diminished fortune was difficult, and to pay for them she wrote more magazine stories of lesser quality. But her late novels show that she continued to grow, to encompass some of the changes she saw around her.

And her accomplishment is formidable. She wrote over 40 books, as well as articles, reviews, and poems. Such an output is bound to be uneven, but many of her novels, books on houses and gardens, and travel books remain of lasting interest, and some are of the first rank. Whatever sorrow descended upon her, she had the serenity of knowing she had accomplished much in her life. She died of a stroke in France, in 1937, at the age of 75.

Edith Wharton created her own life—late, but many people never accomplish such a thing. She had some advantages in doing so; inherited wealth to begin with, and thus some education (something women of poorer classes could not obtain); amazingly swift and lasting success in the publishing world from the time of her first efforts; access to the literati in America and abroad by virtue of her elite ancestry and class; and childlessness. She stretched some of the constrictions of her background, but not all; who can? To the end of her life, she wrote almost secretly in bed in the mornings, and spoke little about her work to her friends. She even referred to her writing as her "secret garden," after *The Secret Garden*, a children's book popular in her youth—one I loved too. It had become legitimate for her to write, but not to speak seriously about her work or even to appear to take it seriously. In *A Backward Glance*, she included a chapter on her writing only because the memoir would be the merest profile without it, but she insisted, "Any attempt to analyze work of one's own doing seems to imply that one

BOOKS BY EDITH WHARTON IN PRINT

The Age of Innocence (Scribner's)

The Custom of the Country (Scribner's)

Ethan Frome (Scribner's)

Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton (Popular Library)

House of Mirth (Berkley Books)

Madame de Treymes & Others (Scribner's)

The Reef (Scribner's)

Roman Fever & Other Stories (Scribner's)

Short Stories of Edith Wharton (Scribner's)

Summer (Berkley Books)

Writing of Fiction (Octagon)

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regards it as likely to be of lasting interest, and I wish at once to repudiate such an assumption."

There are signs that she may not have been free from certain prejudices. She has been accused of anti-Semitism, but the portrait of Sim Rosedale in *The House of Mirth*, which begins with the curt contempt that Lily, and the New York society of which she is part, has toward this social climber, ends by granting him a fuller humanity and larger stature than any other man in the book. There seem to be traces or prejudice against blacks in her personal correspondence. She never really understood the labor movement and blamed it on the failure of the upper classes to exercise benevolent paternalism. She abhorred anything bordering on socialism. She believed in the prerogatives of wealth and class, in the necessity for a leisure class, in the idea of legitimacy. That she did, impeded her own development. It also impeded her in her thinking about women. She went as far as she could. And in her going, she created some wonderful things.

MOST CRITICISM of Edith Wharton declares her central concern to be the manners and mores of the old New York society as they gave way before the onslaught of the nouveau riche, the Vanderbilts, Astors, and Whitneys—vulgar, flamboyant, and obscenely rich. She is often described as exalting the past and condemning the present.

In fact, she never exalted the old ways, although, as she grew older, she came to believe there were some fine things in them. But she was never blinded to the stifling quality of the old life; she never forgot being unable to breathe. In any case, the manners and mores of society never provided more than the backgrounds of her novels. They seem emphasized because she describes them so brilliantly.

Wharton had an intense visual awareness, especially of nature—a sensitivity she shares with many of her characters. She had an intense visual awareness of interiors as well. (Edmund Wilson called her—in what spirit is not clear—the "poet of interior decoration.") She was able to conjure an entire way of life with a few concrete details. And she could do this not only with the muted, proper, good but shabby interiors of the old rich, but with the surroundings of the new rich, the very poor, and with landscape, cultivated or wilderness:

> He could see her, as Mrs. Haskett, sitting in a 'front parlour' furnished in plush, with a pianola, and a copy of 'Ben Hur' on the centre table.
>
> —*Roman Fever and Other Stories*

> It was the beginning of a June afternoon. The springlike transparent sky shed a rain of silver sunshine on the roofs of the village, and on the pastures and larch-woods surrounding it. A little wind moved among the round white clouds on the shoulders of the hills, driving their shadows across the fields and down the grassy road.
>
> —*Summer*

Wharton's visual apprehension included people as well as things. She noted vividly postures, gestures, manners of speech, manners of walk, the tilt of a head, the way someone held a handkerchief. She paid attention to clothes, but also to the way they were worn. She knew that surfaces reveal values, that the depiction of significant details creates the texture of a life, and that the deepest beliefs of a person or a culture are perceptible in that texture.

> He gave a little bow, like the bend of a jointed doll, and with infinite precaution let himself down in the chair.
>
> —*Roman Fever and Other Stories*

> She had just time to take her seat before the train started: but having arranged herself in her corner with the instinctive feeling for effect which never forsook her, she glanced about in the hope of seeing some other member of the Trenors' party.
>
> —*The House of Mirth*

In addition to her observant eye for detail, Wharton had deep empathetic currents. Very early in her writing career she wrote a story called "Bunner Sisters." It was not published until 1916, but it demonstrates that right from the outset she was able to extend her sympathies and imagination beyond her own class. The story concerns a pair of very poor women, shopkeepers, both unmarried when the tale begins. Wharton was able to describe their surface life—what they wore, ate, how they worked or rested—but she was also able to enter their imaginative horizon believably. In *Ethan Frome* and *Summer*, she entered fully into the dreams and fears, the sensuous texture and moral underpinnings, of people who were deprived culturally, economically, and socially. In *The Children*, she created a set of youngsters who are ill matched, ill trained, and thoroughly delightful, without being sentimental idealizations. She wrote a novel set in *sèttecènto* Italy;

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she dealt with the war in *The Marne* and *A Son at the Front*; she dealt with working conditions in a factory in *The Fruit of the Tree*. About half her novels and stories are written from the perspective of a male, and of these, at least three are among her finest work—*The Age of Innocence*, *The Children*, and *Ethan Frome*. There are also the strong Ralph Marvell sections of *The Custom of the Country*, and the George Darrow section of *The Reef*.

The things I have been discussing are talents, abilities. They allow Wharton to provide a brilliant surface for her work, a surface which has sometimes been taken for the theme of that work. It is not. Wharton's main theme, her deepest concern, was the emotional and moral life, especially in the area of sexuality.

This large theme is tied to other themes. Female experience is often central in her work. This is true sometimes even when the focus of the story is a male. *The Touchstone*, for instance, depicts a man suffering from guilt as he gradually shifts his contempt for himself onto his wife because he cannot bear "the necessity of defending himself against the perpetual criticism of his wife's belief in him." This early long story (1900) is not one of Wharton's best works, but it is acute in tracing subtly what men do to women in their minds. Since sexual regulation was a major factor in the lives of young women, many of the tales and novels deal with sexual constriction and the social restrictions that arose from it.

The critic Percy Lubbock claimed that Wharton did not have a philosophy. But she did, insofar as any novelist can be said to have a coherent philosophy. Writing continually of constriction and paralysis, emphasizing the bleakness of lives based upon them, she pointed out another direction. "Alas, I should like to get up on the house-tops and cry to all who come after us: 'Take your own life, every one of you!'" she wrote to her friend Sara Norton, who sacrificed her life to her aging famous father, Charles Eliot Norton. Wharton meant take hold of, grasp, live in accord with desire and need. Years later, she wrote to another friend, Mary Berenson, that the "real unpardonable sin" was the denial of life. And by life, she meant largely sexual experience, but also an existence created by the self rather than by society.

Wharton's strongest and most sympathetically rendered characters are women who risk: Justine Brent (*The Fruit of the Tree*), Anna Leath (*The Reef*), Charity Royall (*Summer*), and Kate Clephane (*The Mother's Recompense*). These women have moral courage, something even Wharton's most sympathetic men lack. They are not passive victims of their lives, although there is no question of their triumphing over circumstances. What they do is live their lives out fully, by feeling and thinking through whatever occurs, by refusing to blind themselves. They risk discovering their own dark sides, their sexuality, their guilt, their jealousy. Wharton's term for this process in one novel is "facing it out," confronting and dealing with troublesome emotions—their own and others'—instead of locking them away. Since all these women are confronted with serious, even insoluble difficulties, their behavior makes them large-sized, even heroic. Although all of them end with diminished expectations, with lost dreams, the subtlety, delicacy, strength, and courage of their approaches to life makes them admirable. Their lives are rich not because of what they are able to take from life but because of what they are. Thus, in a sense, all Wharton's work aims toward a definition of what constitutes full humanity; it is not victory over circumstance, but knowledge of the deepest sort, the full living of life.

Wharton is usually assumed to be a lesser Henry James, to be attempting to do precisely what James did. It is true that they were personally close and perhaps had similar sensibilities, and that they were looking at the same world. But James, a man, emphasized the individual within society; he had a strong sense of legitimacy that strengthened and colored what he created. Wharton was far more aware of the power of the environment over the individual, of the sapping of energy caused by a sense of illegitimacy, and of the impossibility of getting beyond the bodily and social consequences of sex. James's genius was linguistic and psychological; Wharton's was sociological and psychological. Without seeming to diminish James—who cannot be diminished—one must separate the two authors and focus on Wharton's excellences. She has a wider scope; she is more interested in the particular experience of women; and she had a profounder sense of constriction.

But this, precisely, is what most dismays some of her critics. Her vision is bleak; for her, life is a prison, they

A DOUBLE-ENDED DORY

You may never understand
why I shoveled the zinnias out of her
after closing time, looking over
my shoulder for cops, if you've
never put offshore
in anything but a hull like tupperware.
But she sat out the calm
in front of the Chowder House,
a hangdog flowerbed
sad as a thoroughbred pointer
wearing a Christmas bow.
Her gunnels were hand-shaved,
her strakes had been soaked to fitting
curves, and when I dug out
her ribs and knees, they still evoked
arches and buttresses. Once she was
tight as a pod, clinker-built
for cod-lining on the Banks:
the deeper the fish in her bins,
the surer she sat two men
in the troughs between waves.
Remembering coves where her corners
might still hold rain
and a plankton swirl, I got one end
up on the tailgate, then shoved
feeling hope throw its weight in
with mine, and took the old county road.

Brendan Galvin

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moan. She has been damned as immoral for her vision. Yet the very critics who do not like her insistence on constriction do not hesitate to castigate female characters for whom Wharton has obvious sympathy—or even Wharton herself—for having abandoned a husband, or a child, or for trying to envision fulfilled happy lives for themselves. They thereby prove the accuracy of her vision. Critics also complain that Wharton's men are either ineffectual—morally or emotionally stunted—or boors. The range of her male characters is far greater than this, and many of them are sympathetic. But there are no knights on white horses in her work, as there are none in life. There are no idealizations, female or male.

Many readers may prefer novels that concentrate on the individual as author or strong co-author of his or her fate, and that diminish the overwhelming pressure of environment and inheritance. Such an attitude is certainly more pleasant and probably healthier to live with than its opposite. But the reverse is also true, a fact we are aware of at least in certain moments of life. And it is morally healthier to remember that we are small units in a large world we cannot control than to delude ourselves. There is room for both kinds of books. To condemn those which refuse to compromise, which refuse to admit that things are for the best in this best of all possible worlds, is to demand that literature be fairy tale.

Wharton had a tougher mind. She would have agreed with Aquinas's statement that "matter is never lacking privation: inasmuch as it is under one form, it is deprived of another." If Wharton concentrated on the privations attendant on a form, rather than on its fulfillment, perhaps that is because she was a woman and more aware of that side of things. It is not an accident that the most vapid and fantastic literature—romance—is written for women, who use it to escape from lives they cannot change. Henry James wrote of Wharton's work: "We move in an air purged at a stroke of the old sentimental and romantic values." Wharton forces her readers to acknowledge the fact that form is imprisonment, that any course has particular consequences, that everything costs something, that actuality is always a diminishment of the ideal, and that the richness of life lies in one's moral and emotional response to one's situation. That is not a small accomplishment.

Varieties of Ambitious Experience

The Fast Track: Texans and Other Strivers
by Nicholas Lemann

(Norton; $12.95)

Ambition, says Nicholas Lemann, is the American condition. It's a simple fact of life, a quality so universal that "to take a stand for or against it would be silly, like passing judgment on breathing or sleeping."

On the other hand, it certainly wouldn't hurt to slip a few forms of ambition under the microscope, and that's what Lemann has done in this intelligent and observant collection. The eight essays appearing in *The Fast Track*—all reprinted from various Texas or Washington, DC, publications—examine strivers of several kinds, from Sherwood Blount, a Texas real estate mogul, to Dr. Michael DeBakey, the world-renowned heart surgeon, to Ellen Stewart, official founding mama of Off-Off-Broadway. Odd bedfellows? Not really. Sherwood Blount, wheeler-dealer though he may be, displays much the same zest for pure *doing* that we find in Ellen Stewart. And Dr. DeBakey, it turns out, is no slouch at wheeling and dealing himself.

"Sherwood Blount's First Million," which for sheer storytelling strikes me as the best piece in the book, covers the course of a single land sale. Ultimately the sale falls through, but till then, what machinations take place! What marvels of maneuvering and reconnoitering and second-guessing! To be a realtor, evidently, takes sleuth work and a good memory. It requires a kind of informed conjecturing beyond the ken of ordinary men.

> The rite of passage into the business is six or nine months spent trying unsuccessfully to make the first deal and driving around town in every spare moment, memorizing the location and particulars—size, access from the street, nearby development—of every vacant lot, supermarket, and gas station. If the construction crews at the new mall are taking long lunches, if a fish-and-chips shop in Garland is doing badly, if there's a For Sale sign on a weedy patch of ground in Mesquite, a good realtor will know about it.

There's no clue as to how the author gained his inside view of Blount—an "I" is carefully absent from the piece—but he is meticulous in recording the tiny, exact detail that tells all. Blount couldn't be more vivid to us if he were in a full-length novel—wearing his brand new three-piece suits and gigantic college ring and tasseled loafers, washing his Styrofoam cups after serving his

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visitors sugar-free Sprites, memorizing every number he dials so as to save himself 15 minutes daily, and beaming with gratification when the head of the Campus Crusade for Christ asks him, a mere East Dallas boy, for a million-dollar donation.

An entire culture is revealed here—or two cultures, really. One is Texan. For instance, a certain Bobbie McKamy, whose new husband has just given her a Lincoln Continental with license plates reading 2 BOBBEE, remarks that "In fact, John's going to get rid of some more of his cars. He just wants enough to be able to say, you know, that he's 'got some cars.' " And just look at her living room: a "symphony in blue," with its blue velvet lampshades, blue tufted reclining chair, blue statuettes and blue candles and blue flowerpots hanging from blue ropes.

The other culture is real estate—a whole separate world, as you'll find when trying to fathom the following conversation:

> 'Any of y'all been to Bennigan's yet?' asked Sherwood. 'I went there last night. Quite frankly, I thought the food was average. Now the design—let's talk about the design for a second. They're trying to cash in on that Friday's flavor, but I don't know if they're gonna be able to get the Friday's crowd—you know, your young singles. But it's a neat concept.'
>
> 'Holiday Inn's starting to get into restaurant concepts,' said Rick from the back seat. 'They've got a concept called Good Company. It's got kind of a sit-down Friday's concept and a salad-deli type concept. Dallas is gonna be their flagship on this, and they've got a dynamite location. We did the deal.'
>
> 'Rick really did a super deal with them, fellas,' said Sherwood. 'A twenty-year lease with two five-year options.'
>
> 'They're aiming for the sophisticated suburbanite,' said Rick.
>
> 'These people are out working,' said Sherwood, 'and they've got a little more income. And yet your Friday's concept is really the best of many worlds. You appeal to your singles, and to your people who live nearby, and quite frankly you appeal to your older people too.'

Passages like the one above show Lemann's sharp ear, his alertness to the language and native customs of the territory he's studying. A hospital's practice of checking its patients' financial status is referred to as a "wallet biopsy." A man rising rapidly through the numbered ranks of a corporation will soon "go into the letters." Someone with a high potential for success is a "hi-po."

In "Big Oil," we're given a staggering glimpse of the personnel policies at Exxon, where absolute loyalty is demanded and the executives on the "fast track" might have been created with cookie cutters, so uniform are their affable manners, their conservative clothes, their attractive wives. In a companion piece, "Little Oil," we meet an independent oilman named Jack G. Jones. Lemann tells us that at the outset, he viewed entrepreneurs like Jones as symbolic of the worst of America, but gradually he came to appreciate the risks Jones takes and his contribution to the economy; and he offers several suggestions as to how the government might encourage the private speculator.

Such fairness is the keynote of these essays. There is an open-mindedness, a willingness to alter judgment, and a balanced, level tone that inspire trust. In "The Medical Center," we see the underside of the giant medical complex at Houston:

> Yes, miracles are performed there, but so are unnecessary procedures. Yes, the doctors are dedicated, but they're also prima donnas. Yes, the care is good, but it's a lot better for those who can pay for it than for those who can't. Yes, the hospitals have won the world's admiration, but they have done so partly through ardent self-promotion and concentration on the most spectacular and expensive kinds of patient care. The Medical Center's main goal is producing advanced medicine, and it does that very well. But advanced medicine and health are not always the same thing.

Lemann can be inventive—watch him explain why the Educational Testing Service in Princeton is partly responsible for this country's rootlessness. And he can be delightfully wry, as when examining the self-help business in Texas—those instant-success courses where awkward teenaged girls are taught not to wear T-shirts with hanger-bumps at the shoulders, and where businessmen are urged to set Life Goals for themselves. (Jean Claude Killy did, after all, "and now he's sponsored by Chevrolet.")

On occasion, he can tell us a little more than we want to know—as in "The Split," an anatomy of a schism in a major law firm. I began by admiring the investigative skill that this piece must have required, and ended up wondering if it were worth the effort. You can develop a headache just trying to sort out the cast of characters and the tangle of allegiances and sub-allegiances, although lawyers no doubt will have an easier time of it.

This is also a book that seems to have slipped through the printer's hands without benefit of proofreaders. It must set some kind of record for typographical errors. Bear with it, nonetheless. *The Fast Track* is, for the most part, an absorbing collection—a crisply written, clear-eyed study of America's travels upward.

Anne Tyler

The Rustic Imagination

English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1950 by Martin J. Wiener

(Cambridge University Press; $15.95)

For generations historians turned out volumes about the causes and origins of the rise of the British Empire and its industrial primacy. Then, at first tentatively, historians started writing about the causes and origins of the decline of the British Empire and of Britain's industrial stagnation. Since Britain and its economy indisputably did rise *and* decline, this is natural, but both schools sometimes are inclined to write as if they were dealing with complete and even final phenomena instead of with two aspects of the same phenomenon. It is clear that the apparently conflicting historical developments had the same roots, that the causes of the decline are to be found intertwined with consequences of the rise. The tendency of historians to behave like journalists and to try to explain the present instead of the past is common enough to justify finding a name for it. Let us call it the "telic fallacy" and hope that if, by any

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chance, Britain should rise again, historians will not promptly forget about the recent decline and set about tracing new origins, new causes.

Martin J. Wiener of Rice University is a learned and perceptive man, and he writes engagingly. Still, he is affected by the telic fallacy. He is trying to find a simple explanation of what happened to British economic power and primacy, in particular, to offer an analysis different from that of historians who look to strictly economic facts and changes in the world economy. Wiener thinks there were different and paramount causes and that they are to be found in an examination of English culture. The result is a well-written, fascinating, and persuasive study of a confused identity, or false self-image, energetically disseminated by the leaders of England in the century after the Great Exhibition of 1851, which had seemed—erroneously—to prophesy a growing national pride in English productivity and industrial and technological achievements. The trouble with the British economy, he sets out to demonstrate, was chiefly one of attitude.

NOBODY who has read much popular English fiction of the last 100 years—the detective fiction, for example, of Dame Agatha Christie or Dorothy L. Sayers—could doubt that there was a false self-image. The literary geography of England has practically nothing to do with its economic geography; the landscapes of literature in fact are inhabited by about a tenth of the population. Rhetoric and writing are studies in incontinent nostalgia for farm, village, and drowsy cathedral town, and for people who are either semi-literate hayseeds or well-trained in Greek and Latin. Central Birmingham was not often a subject of fiction, and sympathetic fictional people are rarely graduates of schools of engineering or business administration. In those 100 years, fictional studies of harsh poverty were most often of rural poverty, in Hardy or in books like Mary Webb's *Precious Bane*.

Wiener thoroughly proves his case for the existence of a false self-image. His book consists largely, and effectively, of surprising quotations from influential people who should have known better, and he shows that the fantasy world was shared by representatives of every social class and ideological persuasion. The folkish socialist William Morris is one of the most striking examples, and a famous poem of his starts out with lines that might well serve as an epigraph for Wiener: "Forget," Morris exhorted, "six counties overhung with smoke, forget the snorting steam and piston stroke." And literate England mostly forgot, and if it remembered, it did so only to deplore.

THE SAMPLES are endless and, taken together, shocking. It is a cliché that successful businessmen resolutely turned themselves into landed gentry as fast as they could; it is less obvious that a novel like *Hard Times*, which seems to deal with the wickedness of capitalists, is in fact a very reactionary book. Dickens was deploring not simply industrialists but industry, and his rejection of city life as corrupting grew more open in his later writings; finally, in *Drood* Dickens wrote of a good, gray cathedral town untouched by the machine age. Kipling and Fletcher, ideological opposites, united in lauding rusticity. The radical Hammonds, distinguished historians of rural labor, were responsible for giving a statistical basis to the myth of a pre-industrial rural idyll. Ernest Bevin, the union organizer and foreign minister in the Labour government of 1945, denounced Americans because they talked so much about increasing productivity—scarcely less relentlessly than his Tory predecessor, Lord Halifax, who stated flatly that he hated technology. Beatrice Webb, one of the founders of the Labour party, wrote that she was against "plenty"; her ideal was "people divested of all human appetites." Influential people of all social and political opinions deplored businessmen and technicians as inherently caddish.

Wiener does not explain *why* novelists, tractarians, artists, philosophers, academicians, and political thinkers of all stripes should have united so determinedly against the common enemy of industry in the years immediately after the 1851 festival of technological progress and material riches, but Wiener has plenty of quotations to show that they did. People who had written exuberant poetry about railways in the 1840s now, to a man, began to write poetry about sturdy yeoman and furze cutters. Industry and industrial cities were presented as something best overlooked and, as Morris said, forgotten. Beatrice Webb's "plenty" was denounced as un-English. George Lansbury, the leader of the Labour party in the 1930s, liked to talk about merry England. "American-

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ism" increasingly became a code word for gross materialism, lack of culture, moral depravity, and dedication to the production of goods.

The inference that must be drawn from Wiener's staggering collection is that, after 1851, the adoration of technology turned sour as a consequence of Britain's dissolving monopoly on it. As America and Germany took the industrial initiative, what had once been a glory became a threatening vice, and the leaders of society grew positively devoted to stagnation. By the end of the 19th century anything that led away from stagnation was regarded as un-English and also (or therefore) downright immoral. As late as the 1950s, the vice chancellor of one of the new universities was denouncing demands that they provide instruction for "the crude engineer, the mere technologist."

No rational reader could resist the impact of this book. But it must be said that a volume based on selected quotations lacks the foundations for systematic analysis. No one can doubt that from 1850 on accepted ideas of propriety demanded, and the public schools and Oxford and Cambridge instilled, reverence of politer gods than turbines. But to say that something was true is not the same as proving it was an exclusive cause. Several other things must be taken into account. One is that public education was long delayed in Britain, and public secondary and technical education was not available until 1902. This delay must explain at least partly the fact that Britain's ranking on the roster of major inventors fell further and further below the places of France, Germany, and the United States, and the delay itself was due at least partly to competition among religious sects that had little to do with genteel disdain for practicalities.

It must, moreover, be observed that such disdain was not absent from America, which had its own worshipful myths of rusticity and gentility. The superior morality of people on farms and in small towns was a standard theme of popular American drama and fiction into the 20th century. American radicals such as the Populists preached the Jeffersonian dogma that purity of heart lay in rural areas, and Brook Farm and Bucks County are early and late examples of rustic nostalgia among the American intelligentsia. No less than their counterparts in England, American captains of industry showed an inclination to turn themselves into patricians with large country houses. MIT and Harvard Business School now command immense prestige, but until very recently Harvard College commanded much more. The difference between American and English views of the sordidness of machines was one of degree.

There were much larger and more basic differences between the two countries that certainly must have counted in the growth of England's righteous championship of stagnation. America, thanks to the size of its domestic market and the abundance of its resources, obviously was vastly better fixed to foster an expanding industrial establishment. It did not depend on a fragile empire, or an equally fragile supremacy of navy and merchant marine, for continued growth. It did not depend on overseas investment for a stable balance of payments. One could, I think, argue that widening differences in moral and cultural attitudes toward "mere technology" and toward the study of Greek and Latin in schools, and the feeling among cultivated and powerful people that all businessmen were cads, were for the English a defense of the national ego against economic vulnerability—a consequence that became a cause.

Laurence Lafore

Laurence Lafore is professor of history at the University of Iowa.

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A Novel of the New South

Original Sins
by Lisa Alther

(Knopf; $13.95)

In *Original Sins* Lisa Alther returns to the locale of her first novel, *Kinflicks* (1975), to carry on what she began there, charting the moral topography of her portion of the south—the industrial valleys of eastern Tennessee that, by virtue of abundant coal, cheap electricity from TVA, and non-union labor, had been exploitable ground for capital investment from the north long before most Americans ever heard of the new south, or what its chambers of commerce sunnily call the Sunbelt. It is the new south whose basic economic premises were already plain enough half a century ago to arouse resistance among sentimentalists of the old south such as the 12 writers who collaborated in 1930 on the Agrarian manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*. Alther's novels are latter-day confirmations of the Agrarians' bleak vision of an industrialized south. Torn by labor strife, divided by racial animosity, beset by anomie, and uglified by highway strip development, the new south is a mess.

Original Sins is anything but a sequel to *Kinflicks*, however; it is more of a reprise, a regrouping of familiar elements under radically different theses, as though Alther were dissatisfied with her first efforts and desired to correct, possibly even atone for, them. Newland, Tennessee, in *Original Sins*, is recognizably the Hullsport of *Kinflicks*, and several of the central characters are decidedly Hullsport types, seen this time with a less charitable eye. *Kinflicks* is a broad social comedy verging on farce, in which the social and sexual calamities that befall its heroine, Ginny Babcock, are only Chaplinesque pratfalls, after which she dusts off her baggy trousers, straightens her bowler, and trots off in search of better calamities. The book is alternately ironic and rueful, and it is brilliantly detailed by a comic imagination that thrives on disillusionment and is ever eager to suffer the worst for the sheer fun of it. *Original Sins*, by contrast, is a protest novel of a conventional sort, a compound of out-

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rage and doctrine. It is an all-out assault on the south for its rigidly maintained double standards on matters of race, sex, and class and for its failures to face up to its deficiencies.

Ambitious to tackle hard issues in *Original Sins*, Alther multiplies Ginny Babcock by five and sends the pieces into scattered parts of the wilderness of experience and heartbreak. Sally and Emily Prince are daughters of the manager of Benson textile mills, Newland's major industry; Jed and Raymond Tatro are sons of a plant foreman; Donny Tatro, a black, is related to Jed and Raymond through ancestors who once were owned by Tatros and connected to Sally and Emily through his grandmother, who has played Dilsey to several generations of Princes. As children, The Five, as they initially call themselves, play blissfully around a giant beech tree they call the Castle Tree, but as they grow up the realities of money, race, caste, even of looks, pep, and prowess on the athletic field divide them irrevocably, and no measures ever after, not even the shotgun marriage of Jed and Sally, can join together what the facts of life have torn asunder.

What Alther means by original sins, apparently, are the social divisions of an ordered and stratified society that has a place for everyone. Peppy, fun-loving, huggable Sally makes the best of her privileged position as boss's daughter by becoming a cheerleader, a leading member of Devouts (a prayer and popularity club) and Ingenues, and steady date of Jed, who is the star lineman for the Newland High Pioneers. She is everyone's pet. But the Fall takes care of all her bliss, and Sally pays dearly for her bounce and glow by getting pregnant in high school—not so original a sin in Newland—and marrying Jed, with whom she lives wretchedly ever after. Graceless, pensive, phlegmatic Emily, on the other hand, is only a Junior Servicette who longs with all her heart to make Ingenues. She does eventually pass muster but all too late for her spirits, which have been bent by accumulated disappointment into a permanent posture of irony and scorn, for which the boys nickname her "Old Sourpussy." That sourpussy turns out to be her rock and salvation, since her failure to penetrate the mysteries of cheerleading and backseat sex propels her north to college and eventually into the soft underbelly of the Movement (this is the mid-1960s), in which she drifts from civil rights agitation to feminism and finally into a lesbian love affair, discovering there heights of passion and tenderness unknown to the backseat, the drive-in, or the marriage bed. Bridal, Alther tells us, equals bridle.

Jed gets Alther's shortest shrift; he is just the normal, thoughtless jock turned normal, thoughtless racist, sexist, husband, and seducer, and it is hard to tell one of these sins from another. Sally's first lover, he becomes after marriage her keeper, tormentor, and betrayer, dying appropriately in a car crash out front of the Lazy Daze Motel in the company of Betty Osborne, also known as Betty Boobs. Paul had it wrong again. First we marry, then we burn. Jed's death is richly deserved, and it is not too much to say that Alther kills him off in a spirit of gleeful vengeance. Raymond, like Emily, is a misfit in Tennessee and is driven north by a vague rebelliousness that is rooted in a sluggish and indeterminate sexual nature. Though he and Emily are nominally boy- and girlfriend in high school, their infrequent kisses fill both with a saving revulsion that sets them on the proper heading toward alienation, self-realization, and conversion. Raymond converts to Marxism, and though we're meant to take his Marxist account of the economic forces behind the mill system as a correct analysis, we find his sexual austerity and latent Leninism no more admirable than Jed's zealous Lombardyism.

Donny is a moral touchstone for them all, the most comprehensively alienated. A fatherless child, he is abandoned even by his mother when she clobbers a sexually overzealous white man with a brick and has to flee north, leaving Donny with his grandmother. His prospects are the bleakest of the five. But in another sense Donny is a black imitation of Jed, a jock who gives up a promising sports career (basketball, naturally) to marry his pregnant girlfriend and thereafter vents his rage upon her in fearful doses of violence. Donny too migrates to New York in the 1960s to complete his education in black martyrdom and to encounter up north the ideologies of black resistance, and though he is eventually transformed from a shuffling, backwoods lout into a militant black nationalist, toward his wife he remains a brute. Alther's version of the cultural revolution of the 1960s features an unexpected vision of racial integration: black and white together, shoulder to shoulder against women.

It would be gratifying to report that in *Original Sins* Lisa Alther has achieved a satisfactory integration of social ideas and social observation. But for the most part she has not. Her rejection of men is so complete that even their villainy comes right out of central casting. All are dramatized social ideas, clichés or close to it: the good ole boy, the misogynistic revolutionary, the black victim who turns his rage against his wife. Having designated a place for every man and deposited every man in his place, the social redeemer in Alther has given the artist in her no freedom to imagine men afresh. Every man is a robot of inadequacy, who can do little but dramatize over and over his crippled nature, usually through an insistent sexual or racial bullying, until the lesson becomes as boring as it is routine. " 'What do you reckon them jigs earn in a year?' " Jed asks his friend, Hank Osborne, as they watch a Celtics-Knicks game on television.

> 'Fifty, sixty thou, easy. At least it keeps them off the welfare and out of prison.'
>
> 'Motherfucking coons.'
>
> 'Yeah, but they're good ball players. Shit, did you see that one-handed jump shot?'

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by MICHAEL LEDEEN and WILLIAM LEWIS

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That one-handed jump shot gives Alther's game away. Basketball hasn't seen any other kind of jump shot for 30 years; the one-handed jumper is a little like the one-armed throw or the four-wheeled car: not the sort of thing a confirmed sports fan is going to marvel at. Jed, Raymond, Hank—the lot of Newland male society—are cavalierly drawn cartoons who speak a hybrid argot that is half Tennessee, half textbook. " 'It's hard times, folks,' " declaims Raymond in one of his strike speeches at Benson Mills. " 'The old ways is dead and the new ways is yet to come. We got us here a corpse giving birth to a half-formed fetus.' " That corpse and fetus are Raymond's equivalents of the one-handed jump shot, phrases that no man ever spoke. The language of men fails everywhere despite Alther's efforts to spruce it up with a denatured hillbillyism that is indistinguishable from the homogenized mountain dew of "Hee Haw" and "Grand Ole Opry." Alther's men speak a language of universal CB-isms—"withouten we," "we got us here," "it like to happen," "they's jes plumb downright," "infernal new-fangled"—but to no effect, for what is dead at the heart cannot be brought to life by any amount of canned regional flavor. Sally and Emily, whom Alther truly cares about, speak standard, American-heartland English precisely because Alther wants to bring the utmost clarity to what they are experiencing and saying.

What life there is in *Original Sins* belongs to Sally and Emily, and only in their sections does the book achieve anything like the effervescence of *Kinflicks*. In a wonderful scene in which Emily attends a radical feminist concert with her lover, Maria, the theater of adolescent feminism becomes an unintentional vaudeville of protest.

> On stage women plucked dulcimers about strip mining in Appalachia, shook tambourines over torture in Chilean jails. Women in Frye boots and plaid lumberjack shirts twanged Jews' harps for the lettuce harvesters in the Imperial Valley. Castanets clattered on behalf of Cuban (pronounced Coo-ban) sugarcane harvesters. Four women in red flannel shirts and bib overalls stood with raised fists, shouting 'Puerto Rico libre' while a flamenco guitar hemorrhaged offstage.

Lisa Alther is a writer of messy, rambunctious novels, whose vitality is part and parcel of their messiness. But her exuberance can pall, especially when her subject eludes her grasp and she tries to make up for what she hasn't quite fathomed in sheer doggedness. And since she hasn't quite fathomed men—no small matter for a writer whose subject is the ubiquity of sexual grief—she finally has nothing to say about them that can't be found in any handbook of feminist protest. She wants to have it both ways with men: to see them as the enemy, not just of women but of love itself, and to portray them as victims, whose capacity for tenderness, sensuality, and patience has been impaired by economic disadvantage and working-class alienation. The system is to blame. But such a decidedly "liberal" position runs against the grain of her imagination, and she composes the inner lives of Jed, Raymond, and Donny—normally a device for evoking sympathy—only to show us that they are every bit as emotionally arid as they seem. Trying to make them three-dimensional, she merely heightens their one-dimensionality. In basketball this is known as forcing your shot.

Mark Shechner

Mark Shechner teaches English at the State University of New York at Buffalo and is currently writing a book on Jewish-American fiction.

Coming:

Robert Reich on

the Art of Management.

A Drift Toward Disorder

The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967 by Fouad Ajami

(Cambridge University Press; $19.95)

Fouad Ajami is a native of southern Lebanon, one of the battlegrounds of the Middle East, where the Israeli-backed Major Saad Haddad helps prevent a Palestinian or Syrian takeover of the area. The author discloses these and many other personal facts in his preface; indeed they underlie his book. Dr. Ajami believes that scholars cannot be objective umpires: their reflections, experiences, and judgment inevitably form part of their work. Thus he sketches his own predicament; he now lives and works in the United States. His mother knows the traditions and the wounds of his country of origin, while his son, who was born in 1969 and raised in America and to whom Dr. Ajami dedicates this book, is unaware of its troubles.

Personal though it may be, Ajami's book addresses itself to both the specialist and the non-specialist. The canvas has a wide sweep, encompassing psychological, moral, cultural, and "existential" perspectives. The author wisely avoids the usual pitfalls, namely the argument that the Arab-Israeli conflict is central to the predicament he describes, and the corollary that its removal will cure all ills. Of this predicament—the corruption, the violence, and the disorder rampant in the Arab world today—he gives a vivid picture. With the two superpowers towering over world politics, the Arab world, he believes, is in too pivotal a position to be allowed wholly to shape its own destiny.

Dr. Ajami writes that the Arabs handled the defeat of 1967 better than the so-called victory of 1973. The defeat —culturally, psychologically, and politically—was unacceptable and, he argues, served to patch up differences and impose an order that helped prepare the large-scale war of October 1973. The "victory" of 1973, on the other hand, was more difficult to assimilate since it promised an instant remaking of the world, a settling of scores with the West, and revenge for past injuries.

The author crams his book full of opinions and episodes, sometimes at the risk of giving the uninitiated reader the illusion of mastery over a complex intellectual and political scene. But the general reader cannot possibly have

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any idea of the relative importance of the writers and the figures mentioned in such profusion. Summaries of the ideas of intellectuals of various standing—Adonis, Sadeq el-Azm, the founders of the Ba'th, and many others—follow one another in rapid succession, the marginal among them indistinguishable from the important. References to the Palestinian movement as the catalyst for radical politics and as an antidote to defeatism and conservatism; descriptions of the Egyptian position and questions about its centrality to the Arab world; Nasser; Sadat; Assad's acceptance of Syria's geographical and economic limitations; the Muslim Brothers and their teachings; the demise of Arab nationalism—these are only part of what the book tackles. By their very nature, Dr. Ajami's statements invite disagreement. He himself might reconsider, for instance, his affirmation of a Syrian reconciliation with King Hussein, a reconciliation that did not last long; King Hussein has now—but for how long?—aligned himself with Iraq, which is not Syria's best friend. This may serve as one example of the way the author weakens his arguments by linking them to current affairs, or by making statements beyond the reach of available evidence.

Dr. Ajami's general theme is the condition of Arab society. Buffeted by temptations and possibilities unknown before, this society has outgrown its cultural container. A growing imbalance between people and things, a "rupturing of normalcy," an Arabian Nights scene of beggar turning king and king turning beggar, take over the Arab state: this, Dr. Ajami argues, has led to the failure of the Arab strategy of trying to graft a great past onto the power of the modern West.

Dr. Ajami does not mince his words. In spite of their wealth, the Arabs are worse off in 1978 than they were in 1948 and will be even worse off in 1988:

> Neither large wealth nor displays of traditions will arrest the drift towards disorder in vast stretches of the Arab world. Wealth has only underlined a painful gap between what a society can buy and what it can be, between the vast means available to buy into things and the limited capacity to create a somewhat autonomous public project, a livable public order. Likewise the escape into tradition can only aggravate the crisis. The contrived past can become a narcotic. Then reality will intrude and shatter the illusion. Men cannot indefinitely live on frenzy or be kept in a trance.

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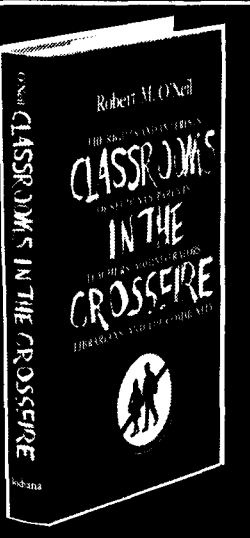

By Robert M. O'Neil
President of the University of Wisconsin

Public schools from West Virginia to Idaho have become a battlefield of controversy involving curriculum content, textbook selection, religious freedom, cultural values, and personal freedom. Conflicts have frequently escalated into bitter court battles or even waves of violence. Robert O'Neil discusses the pertinent cases with insight and tough-mindedness, demonstrating that censorship, racial and religious bias, and intimidation are real forces to be reckoned with.

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It is difficult to see what lesson the reader is to learn from Dr. Ajami's analysis. The historian, of course, is not called upon to offer a remedy; and that Ajami does not offer one is a matter of praise rather than of criticism. But since the book pays a great deal of attention to ideological concepts—national pride, authenticity, self-confidence, patriotism, the Arab's proper place in history, and many other similar concepts relevant to the predicament mentioned in the title—one wants to know what possible way out of this predicament there might be. Is the only solution a personal one—say, emigration to the West, to the United States?

If this is the case, is this book the catharsis one scholar has felt necessary for a proper adjustment to a fresh life?

Sylvia G. Haim

Sylvia G. Haim is the author of *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (University of California Press) and associate editor of *Middle Eastern Studies.*

How Schools Succeed and Fail

High School: Undercover with the Class of '80
by David Owen
(Viking; $12.95)

Making Schools Work: A Reporter's Journey Through Some of America's Most Remarkable Classrooms
by Robert Benjamin
(Continuum; $12.95)

I first met David Owen at an orientation session for students transferring to Harvard University back in 1975. Already he was displaying the talents he would put to use five years later in writing his first book, *High School*. Unlike most of the motley bunch collected from public universities or small-town colleges across the country, Owen was dressed for the Ivies, in crew-neck sweater and owlish horn-rims, and he sat on the edge of the group managing to look like one of the already matriculated who just happened to stop by. That was the last most of us saw of him, for within weeks he'd joined Harvard clubs we didn't even know existed, blending into the crimson landscape with the ease of one born to a Harvard education.

Now Owen has used his amazing capacity to infiltrate in making a downward move, this time joining, in his mid-20s, the slow-tracking senior class of a public high school in upstate New York. The story of Owen's scam has its own drama, beginning with the day he, along with his literary agent who poses as his mother, presents himself, horn-rims and penny loafers exchanged for aviator glasses and running shoes, to Bingham High's guidance staff and comes away victorious with his homeroom assignment. But what is most fascinating about *High School*, Owen's account of his four months as a Bingham senior, is not Owen's descent into adolescence—he cheats a bit by taking the train back to his wife in Manhattan each afternoon—but the picture of what life is like for his classmates for whom Bingham High is inescapable.

At Bingham High, as Owen tells it, popular reforms of the 1960s and 1970s have taken hold with a faculty and administration trained in the 1950s, creating an educational hall of mirrors. At Bingham High Title IX means every girl signs up for golf, a sport she can play in a dress, rather than work up a sweat in her gym clothes playing volleyball alongside the boys who now share her PE class. Technological innovation means a computer in the library that no one but a gifted senior can operate. (This solitary wonk comes to school early to turn on the machine for the librarian just in case any other student should turn autodidact.) Open classrooms mean students shoving desks

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into a semicircle to listen to the lunkhead baseball coach, who doubles as a psychology teacher, read Polish jokes from a paperback.

Such reforms take their place comfortably inside Bingham's 1920s functional yellow brick walls. Most of Bingham's faculty members seem content to teach with outdated textbooks, to escort their students in double file to the cafeteria every day at lunchtime, to police Bingham's corridors and snoop in student lavatories, catching kids smoking cigarettes in doorless toilet stalls. The students themselves seem untouched by any of the political movements of the past two decades: girls are still "chicks," black students can read pro-Klan graffiti on bathroom walls, and every student fears being labeled a "homo."

Still, it's hard not to feel sorry for them as you see Bingham's seniors alternately bored and misled by a succession of teachers who couldn't have been worse prepared if they'd been schooled at Bingham themselves. Who can blame the editor of Bingham's newspaper for a writing vocabulary that includes "butiful," "concentrait," and "els," when his teacher in Honors English fails to correct his definition of "precedent" as "to save for later" in an oral exam?

Public education just isn't doing these kids much good. Certainly it's not preparing them for the college education that might give them other choices as adults besides working alongside mom and dad in Bingham's factory district, nicknamed "Realityville" by some of the students. One of Owen's aims in researching *High School* was to regain a certain luxurious timeless feeling he remembers from his own public high school days in St. Louis. Perhaps Owen, secure in the knowledge that his stay at Bingham would be temporary, was able to relish the sluggish pace of today's secondary schools. But unfortunately for Bingham's seniors, that timeless feeling is derived from the sad fact that their lives have no future.

However, judging from another journalist's odyssey in the land of public schooling, there is some cause for hope. Rather than report on typical schools, Robert Benjamin, education writer for the *Cincinnati Post*, has sought out what he calls "maverick" schools that manage to keep students reading at or above their grade level in districts where most students are already four years behind by the sixth grade. To make his task doubly difficult, Benjamin considered only elementary schools in urban centers where at least 60 percent of the students came from poor families that qualified for free lunch programs.

Not surprisingly, the handful of maverick schools Benjamin found in Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, the Bronx, Houston, Louisville, and Modesto, California, all had succeeded by working to eradicate the twofold problem now endemic in high schools like Bingham: teacher inadequacy and the resulting student apathy. All of the schools practiced variants of a back-to-basics teaching style that emphasizes discipline and the teaching of measurable fundamental skills. Take this description of the opening minutes at Chicago's Beasley Academic Center:

> Maggie Brown Thomas' third graders silently stream in ready to work. They take their appointed seats in Room 229 with businesslike dispatch and attentive postures. No one is chewing gum or wearing jeans. Everyone has their [sic] books, their pencils, their homework: two hours of old-fashioned grammar.

During the course of the day Thomas will proceed to put her 32 students, many of whom live in the crime-ridden high-rise housing project across the street from Beasley, through a series of phonics drills, dictations, spelling and sentence-parsing tests, and vocabulary exercises that would have stumped a good number of Bingham High's seniors, not to mention their English teacher. And, Benjamin reports, those "businesslike," "attentive" third graders thrive on the pressure.

Thomas practices a version of basic education she's developed on her own with support from a principal and school that are dedicated to raising student reading scores. But Benjamin also has discovered a program that doesn't depend on teaching or administrative talent for success. That's DISTAR (Direct Instruction Systems for Teaching and Remediation), implemented at Houston's Wesley Elementary School. DISTAR is a script for students and reading teachers which, according to Benjamin, "leaves nothing to chance. Every action by the teacher—verbal and nonverbal—is specifically outlined; every student response is similarly choreographed . . . in a rapid-fire . . . series of reading and language drills." At Wesley School, where in 1975 40 percent of the sixth graders could not

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read, DISTAR has worked wonders, bringing all students up to grade level in just five years.

Thomas's busy third-grade class and the rigid dialogues of DISTAR could not be further from the free schools described in equally glowing terms by the educational utopians of the 1960s—A.S. Neill, George Leonard, and others. Those model classrooms were alive, too, but with the sounds of students who roamed from one learning center to another, trailed by teachers who acted as facilitators rather than instructors. But according to Benjamin and the many teachers, principals, students, and parents he interviewed, the free school concept was wrong from the start. Children, says Benjamin, respond best to clearly defined authority figures and externally imposed assignments. This belief has been born out in the results of a federally funded study called "Follow Through" which, starting in 1967, monitored the progress of nine different instructional styles practiced in public schools in 180 communities. After ten years and more than $500 million, tests showed that, in Benjamin's words, "highly structured instructional programs were much more successful in raising achievement than those based on the 'open classroom' concept. . . . The structured models also were far more successful in raising students' levels of pride, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility."

It is hard to say whether Benjamin's findings simply reflect another phase of the pendulum swing from reform to reaction that has characterized American education since the days when the nation's first free school movement gave way to McGuffy's Reader. In a system as unmanageable as the US public schools, what is certain is that even if the federal government endorsed a program like DISTAR it would be implemented at least as often by bored gym teachers who stumbled over the words in their scripts as by energetic teachers like Maggie Brown Thomas. But chances are that DISTAR will never reach most inner-city schools where federal aid is often linked to low test scores; improved scores would only mean fewer dollars for the schools. As the Bingham kids would say, that's Realityville.

Megan Marshall

Megan Marshall is associate editor of the *New Boston Review*.

Brief Review

The Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav by Arthur Green

(Schocken Books; $11.95 paper)

Arthur Green's *Tormented Master* attempts to do for Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav what Erikson did for Martin Luther—place the life of a spiritual leader in psychological perspective. Like the leaders of other Hasidic groups—Hasidism was an 18th-century popular Jewish revivalist movement—Rabbi Nahman stressed the importance of song and of dance and of meditation alone with nature. He believed dancing to be almost a theurgic act, capable of averting suffering and "evil decrees." For him, as for mystics of all religions, every aspect of nature, every blade of grass, was precious as part of a higher harmony. He wrote: "Every shepherd has a particular melody, according to the grasses in the place where he tends his flock. . . . Each blade of grass has its own song. The melody of the shepherd is made up of all these songs." Rabbi Nahman deviated, however, from the mainstream of Hasidic thought. Where most Hasidim emphasized the closeness of God and the world, Rabbi Nahman, a complicated, stormier, and altogether more contemporary figure, stressed the gulf between spirit and flesh. Subject to violent alternations between exaltation and negation, he would cry out, Socrates style: "I know nothing!" Then, on the upbound, he would declare: "My 'I don't know' is even higher than my teachings!"

For him the never-won conflict with evil, with sexual guilt, and with a self-doubt amounting almost to nihilism forms not only his own spiritual path, but is mapped out as a model for his disciples to follow. Arthur Green suggests that Rabbi Nahman saw the whole cosmos as a projection of his own personal myth—a very modern judgment—and, even more startling, Green hints that on his deathbed the Master ordered the burning of some magical book which contained evidence that he had put forward redemptive and even messianic personal pretensions. It was only after he had lived to see many deaths in his family, says Green, particularly that of his only son, and only when he himself was slowly dying of tuberculosis that Rabbi Nahman's hopes that he would be revealed as the Messiah were dashed. And it was only then, claims Green, that Rabbi Nahman took to weaving his poignantly beautiful tales, thus transposing historical redemption to the plane of imagination. Here the peasant motifs of the lost princess, the outcast prince, conceal the mystic's faith in the Divine Presence obscured behind phenomena.

Green's psychologizing often reduces to banality the spiritual greatness of another age. What in fact stands out in the book is the burning passionate language of the Master himself or quotations from biographical accounts of Rabbi Nahman's contemporaries. (Green is a superb translator of these texts.) The account in the first appendix by an eyewitness of the death of the Master—and his attempt to minister to his disciples till the last and their efforts to help him in his final agony—is, in its stark and awesome simplicity, comparable to the very greatest in any religious tradition.

In the end it seems that Rabbi Nahman was able to affirm the redemptive purpose of suffering, for in his last teaching he suddenly cried out: "Do not despair! . . . There is no such thing as despair at all!" And, the contemporary eyewitness goes on to comment, such a statement coming from such a source at that time "taught everyone, for all generations, that he should never despair, no matter what it is he has to endure."

Freema Gottlieb

Freema Gottlieb is a New York writer.

Correspondence, *from page 7*

dor we pay lip service only to political and economic reform." For this you give good marks? Then you weakly speculate: "Perhaps the Reagan policy will mature with time." Not bloody likely! What's already rotten can only decompose. Already the stench of corruption mingled with the human misery that hangs over what Jeane Kirkpatrick calls "moderately repressive" regimes is intolerable to anyone who truly cares about human rights and the principles of freedom and justice we are supposed to stand for. To support such

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regimes, while abandoning their oppressed peoples, is the policy of cynicism born of decadence. It deserves only a double red F in the grade book of morality.

Mary S. Huhn
Devon, Pennsylvania

The editors reply:
The editorial actually was highly critical of Reagan's foreign policy. It gave tentative high marks to the administration only for forcing a slowdown in Communist arms flows into El Salvador and for raising alarms about the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Poland. We're hard graders at *TNR*, but we do wait till the end of term to award Fs.

Nonpartisan

To the editors:
TRB's column in the May 30 issue of *TNR* cited Common Cause as an organization that is considering a campaign to defeat Representative Jim Jones next year. Common Cause has not and will not be considering such a campaign. Common Cause is a nonpartisan public interest group that neither opposes nor endorses candidates for public office. Common Cause *does* oppose the influence special interest groups obtain through campaign contributions.

Fred Wertheimer, President
Common Cause
Washington, DC

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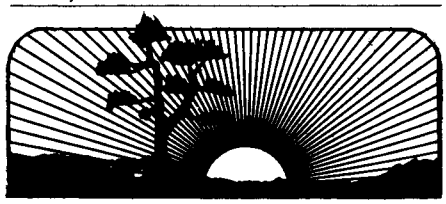

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Washington Diarist

Contradictions

The right-to-life lobby has devised an ingenious new argument to use against liberals which made its television debut (I think) in the following exchange on "Meet the Press" on May 24 between columnist Carl Rowan and Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker:

Rowan: Don't you see anything contradictory about a government which says, 'we are going to get the government off the backs of the people,' encouraging legislators to put government on the backs of the women of this land by saying that the state virtually owns her body from the moment of conception? Is there no contradiction?

Schweiker: I think where I see the contradiction is that we have a proposal that says, in essence, that we are going to save the baby seals, we are going to save the baby whales, we are even going to save the snail darters and stop a dam, but we won't save the unborn child. I have trouble seeing why we can get all wrought up about tadpoles and not unborn kids.

Rowan: I am talking about women, not tadpoles.

Schweiker: So am I, and I am talking about unborn babies and the right to kill them.

I must say, I find the argument very disturbing. How is it possible for liberals to show humane compassion for seals and snail darters, to put "Save the Whales" bumper stickers on their cars and hold deer hunters in contempt, and yet treat abortion merely as a surgical procedure, like removing a cyst? The pro-abortionists' logical out has been to deny as much as possible that an unborn baby is either human or alive. So giving birth becomes "bringing a pregnancy to term" and being "pro-abortion" is masked as being "pro-choice."

Like most liberals, I find it comforting to point out logical contradictions on the anti-abortion side. They are abundantly available. Earlier on "Meet the Press," Rowan asked Schweiker how he could defend the Senate's decision of March 21 to deny women Medicaid payments for abortions in cases of rape or incest. Schweiker said that the legislation still permitted federal funds to pay for a D & C or for a morning-after birth control pill, before a diagnosis had been made that a rape or incest victim was pregnant. Yet this position flies in the face of the anti-abortion drive to have the law declare that life begins at the moment of conception. Schweiker was saying, in effect, that destroying a fetus is all right if we just do it quickly.

The anti-abortionists' enthusiasm for life has a tendency to fade when it comes time to throw the switch on the electric chair. In this connection, Nancy Reagan said something in her interview with Barbara Walters last week that bids fair to join the pantheon of great absurd quotations. "I agree with the death penalty," she began. Then the punchline: "I think that people would be alive today if there were a death penalty." Marvelous.

Actually, of course, the pro-lifers have worked their way around that argument long since. What they are defending, they say, is *innocent* human life. No doubt the Roman Catholic church and other religious groups base their opposition to abortion on this ground, but to the extent that the right wing—old and new—is behind right-to-life, this would be the first time that innocent life has been its primary concern. Back in the 1950s, the right wanted to launch preemptive nuclear strikes on the Soviet Union and China, and its solution to the Indochina war was to bomb North Vietnam into the stone age, even if children, old people, and pregnant women happened to be in the way.

Somehow I do not find Jesse Helms and Henry Hyde in the front ranks of those demanding that Americans spend more money on foreign aid to help starving refugee children in Africa. Helms advocates military aid to fascist (sorry, "authoritarian") dictators to help them exploit and suppress their own peasants. Here at home, it's hard to remember any militant right-to-lifers having been in the forefront of the various movements to ensure that people live a decent life once they are born. You name a government program that might improve the lives that people actually live—public health, job training, anti-poverty, child nutrition, civil rights—and the chances are that the same people who vote right-to-life are voting no. Helms and Hyde want a rape or incest victim to bear her child, but they don't want to provide the social support services to give the baby a decent life.

The third contradiction in the right-to-life case is the one Rowan mentioned—the tendency of right-wingers to want the government out of the people's business where money, property, and firearms are concerned, but right in the middle of their family and sex lives. The right wing wants to ban sex education, stop giving birth control devices to teenagers, and outlaw abortions. It really wants to make pregnancy the punishment for sex, which is a pretty sick view having little to do with loving or respecting life.

So if Richard Schweiker starts beating you with the snail-darter stick, hit him back with the starving children of Africa. But this still doesn't answer the problem of unborn children who have the potential of life even if we do not know exactly when they are "alive." Liberals have to find some way to recognize their humanity as well as that of the pregnant woman whose life may well be ruined (for one reason or another) if she does not have an abortion and who may die if she does not have a safe and legal one. There is no satisfactory resolution to this dilemma, and certainly none that will end the absolutist warfare between ardent right-to-lifers and "pro-choice" militants. But one conscientious step that liberals could take is to advocate strict observance of the Supreme Court's 1973 abortion decision, *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortions during the first trimester of pregnancy, gave states authority to regulate abortions medically in the second, and banned abortions in the third. If we do not know when life begins, we do know that fetuses become viable in the last three months of pregnancy, yet about 11,000 third-trimester abortions are performed each year. That surely should stop.

Liberals also could stop laughing at Senator Jeremiah Denton's so-called "chastity bill" and stop screaming "censorship" when citizen groups (even if they are right wing) lean on the TV networks to stop purveying the message that sex is all there is to life. Denton may be naive and rigid—he defines promiscuity as "having sexual intercourse out of wedlock"—but he is for sex education and support services to pregnant teenagers. I have no doubt, ultimately, that the Moral Majority will try to stop TV from pushing evolution and humanism as well as sex. But it's a real problem that 1.1 million teenage girls get pregnant each year, and what these right-wingers want to do about it is better than counseling abortion.

M.M.K.

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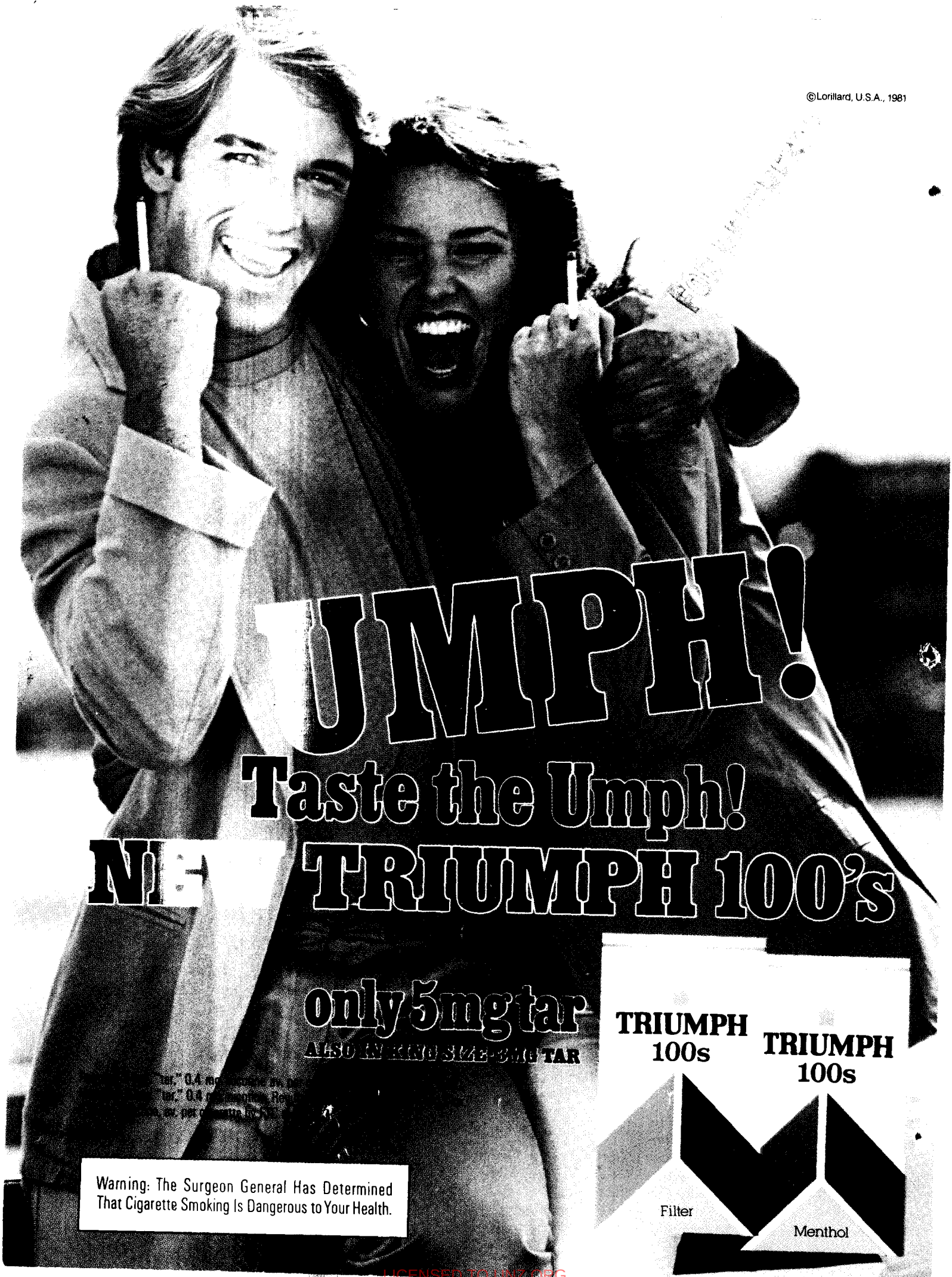

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